. . THE FRINGE OF AN . . ART

IN
MEMORY
OF
EDWARD
ZIEGLER
1870-1947

To/ Philip Hale

With kind regards

from

Vernon Blackburn.

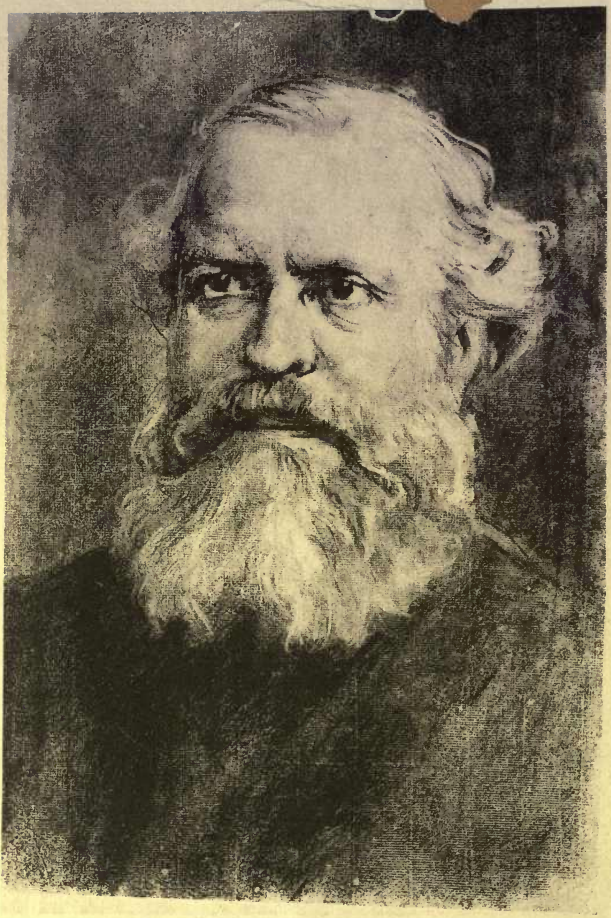
May 9. 189

For dear Eddie Ziegler

from

Philip Hale

. . THE FRINGE OF AN . . ART



THE FRINGE OF AN ART
APPRECIATIONS IN MUSIC
BY VERNON BLACKBURN

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. . . . . TO

F. SCOTT MANGLES, ESQ.

THESE ESSAYS ARE AFFECTION-

. . . . ATELY DEDICATED

APPRECIATIONS BY VERNON BLACKBURN:—

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THE flight of time is the passing of modernity. To take the words explicitly, I mean that the curious characteristic which we call "modern," and which is the first exceptional quality of every masterpiece in every art, necessarily dies out of it with the flight of years. Explained thus, simply, and in plain words, there is a savour of truism in my phrase; and yet I do not merely and baldly mean that an artistic production, like man, like the flowers, like the sun, grows older as the years go; I mean that those years do actually steal from it an absolute quality which it once possessed, and that the passage of time creates a supreme test of worth, not as the common opinion has it, because the average judgment of men declares this work or that work to be supreme, but because it survives in the average judgment of men after it has lost its overpowering quality of modernity. It is often a mystery that certain productions of the human brain are able to command an extensive and exciting popularity upon the moment of their publication, and that, after a brief lapse of years, they are permitted to fall, as Jeremy Taylor has it, into the lot of outworn faces. In nearly every such instance it will be found that the popularity that encompassed their few hours of triumph, was

due to a certain modern quality which appealed either to the vulgar heart, or to the heart of the elect artist, but which, dying out with the minutes that move like "the waves upon the pebbled shore," has left it pale, bloodless, shorn of vitality and of staying power.

I have hinted that modernity may even deceive the judgment of the elect. But this is rare. As a general rule, Art, regarded as a belief, implies an implicit surrender not because it is reasonable, but because the believer knows himself to be right. The artist, let me say, is aware of beauty as the devout Mussulman is aware that Mohammed is the Prophet of Allah. There is indeed a strong analogy between the "credo" of art, and the "credo" of a definite religious faith. An artist is intolerant, he is exclusive, and his mind is fixed. Just as an infallible source of religion forbids so much as a question upon its promulgations, so the artist, himself an infallible source, allows no doubt upon the doctrines that he has sanctioned by his word of decree. He knows because he believes. There is, indeed, no such possibility as an artistic axiom. The collection of the world's loveliness is there for him, even as the collection of a Church's dogmas is there for the religious believer. He

belongs to the faithful, a rare band, whom he meets here and there, up and down the spaces of the world, and not necessarily in an intimate circle, although it may be his good fortune to find himself near others of the faith. The discovery of a disciple to the world's art is to him always a new and exquisite surprise, wheresoever such a one may be found. They recognise the mutual knowledge in chance words, as lover recognises lover in the meeting of casual glance with casual glance. And even as a John of the Cross and a Teresa ỹ Ahumeda in their first moment of intercourse knew and stood amazed because each had experienced the mystical and spiritual emotions of the other, so there are those who, very lonely within themselves, doubting the truth of their artistic revelation, knowing their own joy, yet in part looking at it askance, find a sudden identity of thought and judgment, of delight and experience, which fortifies their hearts, almost faint for consolation, into a triumph of certitude and a glory of righteous intolerance. Yet even this almost sacred gift may, as I say, be duped by the shining and angelic garment of modernity.

So limited a being is man, that there comes a time in the life of every human creature of full

experience when he has absorbed as much of this fashion of modernity as is possible to his nature. From this point onwards the gate is closed, and none can enter therein save those who have the passwords of a former time. The most exquisite artist may knock at that gate, but never hear a word of welcome from within. Berlioz, we are seriously informed, regarded the late J. W. Davison as the greatest of contemporary critics in music; yet, as a recent writer has put the matter, "to the last he refused to accept Wagner." Here is a problem full of significance. In these days, when Wagner has been set upon the throne that is his by right, our natural reply in the face of this situation is that Berlioz was most egregiously mistaken; that Davison, by his refusal to accept Wagner, was clearly a man without claims to serious consideration, and that it is a matter for general congratulation that the "old school" has made its final bow to the world. It seems a rapid and complete method of dealing with a difficult subject; but it suffers from baldness and inconsistency. For my part, I accept the judgment of Berlioz within certain limits. I am prepared to believe that Davison was an acute and penetrating critic, a man of single and sincere aims, and

gifted with considerable powers of expression; and I believe also that when Wagner, girt in all the glory of his modernity, came to him, he was as incapable of receiving that guest, as the air filled to its point of saturation is incapable of retaining more moisture.

It is obviously impossible to define the quality of modernity in music in such words as would explain its individual peculiarity, seeing that its very essence lies in this, that the modernity of one period is the old-fashion of another. In its highest development, however, it may be regarded as in some sort the prophetic reflection of the culminating intelligence of any generation, either actually living or immediately about to be. As a rule, if this quality is unaccompanied by any solid foundation of art, its lucky possessor enters into a direct inheritance of popularity; if, on the other hand, the artist combines his modernity with a large remainder of genuine and inalterable substance of art, he perplexes his contemporaries, and thereby, for a space at least, delays his victory. But whether he attain to that victory immediately or subsequently, it will not be by the fact of his modernity that he will finally be judged. This is a sign rather than a proof of his living merit.

When one looks back upon the history of musical art, it is always to discover the same factor running influentially through every passage and incident of its career. It is curious enough to an unreflecting mind to read, for example, that account, in Dr. Burney's published travels, of the distinguished musician's visit to the house of Gluck, who was condescending enough—he was one who rarely so condescended—to play through the greater part of his newly-written *Alceste*. It is clear, from Burney's almost fanatical language, that to him this opera had said the last word of music. He speaks indeed of Gluck as not only the greatest musician who had been, but as the greatest who could ever be. And, indeed, it is not for me to controvert so profound a critic as Burney; doubtless to him Gluck *was* the greatest musician that could ever be, and if it had been possible that *at that time* upon his astonished ears the prelude to *Das Rheingold* or the *Pathetic Symphony* should burst, he would, I do not question, have merely added a wise and ponderous note to explain the maniac tendencies of posterity. Nor am I so void of humour as to forget that my pitting of Wagner and Tschaikowsky as modern musicians against Gluck as an old musician can

have no more than a passing significance. A century hence—who shall say?—the world will be expressing itself with so intense a sentiment of novelty that Wagner will appear simply as a classic author who did supremely for his art and deserved well of it, but not as one possessed of any feverish message for the times of which he was but the artistic ancestor.

There is a pathos, then, in the modernity of an art, a pathos which centres in the reversal of the legend of Pygmalion and Galatea. Within living memory the publication of Berlioz's *Damnation de Faust* — to take this for an example — was assailed with fierce vituperation, just because of its audacious appeal to all that was most advanced and modern in human feeling. Even Wagner hesitated and wavered. He respected the genius of Berlioz, so he declared; but Berlioz had in this case overstepped the right line which separates eccentricity from depth of insight. And Berlioz himself had doubts, and mourned his unpopularity. He had prayed the gods to grant him the glory of constructing a classical work; and the gods had given into his hands, as it seemed, a living creature with a strange face and inimitably restless manners, a creature that affrighted men by its contortions,

its brutal gestures, its wild, ferocious, dervish-like antics. Berlioz died, and the gods granted his former prayer. The living creature slowly shuddered into marble; the strange face composed its features into a solemnly beautiful but terribly sorrowful expression; the antic gestures caught themselves up into one simple vital pose of warning and hope; the ferocity and exaggeration of movement softened into the presentation of an attitude of despair calling for light in darkness; the *Damnation de Faust* had become a classic. And now—well, now—it has taken its place with *Elijah* and *Messiah* among the annual performances of the Royal Choral Society.

So the music of the world flies away from us as we watch the burning out of the sun. Like bird after bird its newness flies from us, and finds separate resting-homes here and there in the places of the past. We who live and observe whither it has flown have also the privilege of noting the flight of the celestial bird as it leaves our shores this day for the South that lies behind us. It is a privilege that has its perils. So fascinated are we by the glory of vitality, this aspect and act of modernity, that we incline to praise our joy of to-day at the expense of the pleasure of yesterday. The inclina-

tion has its excuse. For though I can love, admire, praise, laugh over, weep over, the work of Mozart, I do not ever hope to find in that work the particular and shaking emotion which took me by the soul when first I listened to Tschaikowsky's *Pathetic Symphony*. It is the tendency of man to deify that modern emotion at whatever period of the world's history it may chance to arise; yet I would not care to prophesy that the *Pathetic Symphony* will be admired a century hence, though I am assured that the achievement of Mozart, tested by the greatest of all tests, the passing of its modernity, can never take a lower place in the Palace of Art. The spring of yesteryear may have been more beautiful than the spring of to-day; but to-day we live in to-day's spring. It is fine to live in the spring of modernity, but the leaves are ripening for the fall, and next year there will be another spring.

. . . "A
CENTURY
. DEAD"

MUSIC has travelled since the death of Mozart; but scarce forwards. Schools have their day and pass. Change accosts every art; and progress is the most delusive term that ever bewrayed the tongue of man. In this day we are fearful of pleasure; guiltily we eye the innocence of mere delight; we are for the marriage of the Muses—as it were to make honest women of them. The minor human mind has reached so strange a confusion that it has come to consider music as a matter of (more or less) articulate language. Pornography, it seems, haunts this or that phrase; speculation this other; immortality is denoted thus; thus you are made aware of philosophical systems. We are nearing a code. We shall presently converse in six-eight or common time, according to the acuteness of our feelings; a *prestissimo* will prostrate us with convulsive laughter; an *adagio* will persuade thousands to Buddhism; and some satanic *allegretto* will compel a weak-principled (but otherwise religious) man into the wildest excess of rapine and disorder. And this development—the picture is but a logical exaggeration of much wild criticism—we are to regard as a high illustration of progress in music! The times of Mozart are indeed dead—"dead and done with."

"A CENTURY DEAD"

"A CENTURY DEAD"

The musical spirit of Mozart's generation was in peculiar harmony with his genius. Then, in the phrase of Mr. Herbert Statham, "counterpoint was still a pure joy to the craftsman; when symphonies might be written in two or three days, or an overture or sonata turned out the evening before an announced performance, with no idea of an object beyond the frank delight in beauty of melody and finish of form and execution; with no demand from the audience for a meaning to the work, and (thank Heaven!) no one to flourish the showman's pointer through the pages of a *programme raisonné*." And through it all you follow the steps of the little musician, mostly radiant and splendid, as he passes from honour to honour, finally from undenied supremacy to a wasting poverty and an almost hidden death. In Courts (you know his little suit of pale blue satin, his white silk stockings) playing to astonished kings and queens; in drawing-rooms discussing impromptus with a miraculous exuberance; in the arbour composing his *Don Giovanni*—perennial "glory of our blood and state"; in his bedroom, the night before the production, writing the overture, the while his wife persuaded wakefulness by the telling of fairy tales; in the Sistine Chapel

recording in his memory, at a hearing, the secret and unpublished papal *Miserere*; or, on the stage, surprising his Zerlina into a satisfactory scream; at billiards, smitten by that angelic melody known now as *Ave Verum*; finally, evolving his *Requiem* under the impression of a strange superstition—through all these famous scenes you follow a man of art whose emotions were transmuted during their passage into pure and absolute music. The foolish world has declared that melody is dead, that it is a thing outworn, that the combinations needed for its existence are exhausted. It is a perishable saying; and had the gods granted to the man Mozart that which they gave to his art,—to be ever fresh and new and immortal and young,—he might have demonstrated its folly; for this musician's gift of melody was inexhaustible.

Of the quality of his art what is left to say now, more than a hundred years from the day he sang his farewell song? One is recorded, after hearing the music of Mozart, to have sighed: "Music was young then." There is a sense in which his words are most true, the sense he had not dreamed; and a sense in which they are most futile. Music has grown no older, never can grow

"A CENTURY DEAD"

older—if it be music indeed, and not a self-conscious array of sounds—than the age she had when Mozart—himself a culmination, himself the greatest expression of a great school—touched the true zenith of his art. One uses such words as these with perfect deliberation. None could deny that in other musicians certain qualities were more acutely developed than in Mozart. In a certain piercing quality Beethoven stands beyond the goal where the younger master stayed; and Handel has left stray passages of music more perfectly statuesque than any of Mozart's. But the perfection of Mozart's gift is neatly illustrated by the physical fate that befell Beethoven. Of him it is chronicled that in the height of his power he could distinguish the sixteenth part of a tone; and of Mozart that he could distinguish the fourteenth. But Beethoven lapsed into deafness, whereas the ear of Mozart never changed. Without question the story is apocryphal; but it serves to illustrate the magnificent equipoise of the younger master, the almost unhealthy overbalance of the elder. Equipoised on splendid levels—that is in truth the description of Mozart's music. Sane—because scholastic—in design, it is clothed with the rarest inspiration of genius; compact in body,

it is elaborate with the insight of a supreme master; gay yet restrained, exuberant without effervescence, serious not sombre, instant in effect yet perdurable in its influence, consciously produced yet with no trace of self-consciousness in the production, here was music unsurpassed — you would say unsurpassable. Yet we who recently chronicled his centenary are vehement over the progress that our music has made since the day when the "little master" signalled in dying a trumpet effect for his *Dies Iræ*. We are moderns all of us.

ARRIGO
. BOITO

ARRIGO BOITO is a Theory. It is not chiefly as a man of flesh and blood who has done and dared—although he has proved himself nobly in these acts of life—that he claims to be considered; but rather as the embodiment of certain principles relating to dramatic music and to the words which dramatic music is made to sing. For he sums up, he perfects, many aspirations which have stirred the desires of men during the past three-quarters of a century. Not only had the ancient forms of music died before he came or was dreamed upon, but the ancient methods of operatic treatment had also long been mortal sick, and were lying on their bed of death. Beethoven, in *Fidelio*, had made one last supreme and consummate effort in the ways and works—the wondrous ways and works—of the past. And therewith an end. Music, always absolute as every art is absolute, had changed its form, and a desire arose for a change of operatic form throughout. Wagner knew that, and Berlioz knew it. Wagner gallantly rushed into the secret house of Time, in the fashion of a colossal *Deus ex machinâ*, to unveil, once for all, the secrets which the future had and still has in store. Berlioz, the past master of orchestration, was content to take up his abode with the common

masters of music by reason of that title of his to fame.

This preface must serve as some apology for the treatment of Boito as a theory rather than as an agent. He is partly famous by reason of a collaboration destined to an immortality which may with confidence be predicted; and partly by reason of some very singular and interesting work in which he has been content to stand alone. This is the man as he is known to the public; and these seem to be the points of treatment upon which alone he can prove a study of any interest. He is then, primarily, an artist in *libretto*, and his *libretti* take rank among the very first of their kind. How shall one describe him—him, Boito the Theory? He is certainly not the outcome of the conventional school of opera (as we call it now). Neither is he to be ranked among those to whom the dramas of Wagner are rightly gospel; nor yet as a revolutionary, nor yet as a mistake. He has garnered as it were the aftermath of revolution. He has wandered where the storm passed; and he has thus learned some secrets of the lightning, part of the emptiness of the thunder. To appreciate him fully, I trace backward somewhat. Serious operatic writing in the eighteenth century had

been, as it must ever be, a conscientious matter between the writer and the composer. The writer accepted the forms of his time, which are still sufficiently understood to give excuse for no lengthy description in this place. Such were the forms which Mozart used, and which his Da Ponte prepared for him. But of mere form the world is apt to tire. The men of genius pass and the day of the Common Fool dawns—a day of which the Common Fool is perfectly ready to avail himself. Of the ancient form he makes so mediocre an instrument—that the men who come after, and to whom the gods entrust much, do utterly weary of these played-out conventions, and set out to provide new conventions for themselves. Now, the place of Boito is peculiar. For many years before his *Mefistofele* appeared, the spirit of revolt had been abroad. Wagner had achieved almost the last of his glorious audacities. His poetical aim had avowedly been to change the form of *libretto*, to "naturalise the situations of opera," to put aside the set and preordained operatic steps, to interpret (in a word) the quick spirit which was understood to be the characteristic note of the age in which he lived. Now Boito is a poet, a man who can write his native tongue, and whose conceptions

ARRIGO BOITO

are worthy of being clothed in a worthy language. In *Mefistofele* the old forms are utterly set aside. You have the chorus, the recitative, and the song all recast. Part answers to part; dialogue is "naturalised." In *Mefistofele*, Boito, like Wagner, uses a supernatural machinery. Like Wagner, he has his prologues and his transformation scenes. And he can, too, create character. He has proved, too, that in using a new form he can respect the bedevilled conventions which art imposes upon the artist, and that thereby he can produce work which, in the province in which it lies, may be described as great.

Of *Mefistofele* the poet was also the musician; but for the musician a singular fate was in store, a fate accomplished by the rare self-abnegation of the man. The strength of Verdi's genius had grown with the years. The passage from *Il Trovatore* to *Aïda* was a fact. He is the simple artist, for whom one art suffices. Developing thus into a consummate master, both of melody and of harmony, proving, too, a genius for the highest forms of dramatic music, he needed his poet to provide him with fitting material. And the gods provided Arrigo Boito. For so ambitious a pair Shakespeare was the dramatist; and a third time in the

history of musical art the highest and noblest music came to be allied to the work of those who trafficked with the highest and noblest dramatic conceptions. Where Wagner is we know. Gluck had drawn his statuesque art from the Greece of Racine; Verdi, under the guidance of Boito, derived from English poetry an inspiration more rapid, more joyful, less solemn, but scarce less attractive, no less absolute. Now, the music of *Otello* concerns the *libretto* of Boito with the extreme of intimacy. That this should be so was the great design of the collaborators. Boito, moreover, took Shakespeare's play with the intent of reducing it into so perfect an operatic form, on the one hand, that it should reproduce Shakespeare as it were in essence: on the other, that it should be ready as emotional inspiration for music of the highest dramatic quality. His success is unqualified, and the more amazing by reason of its enormous difficulty. As you follow the opera in performance, it seems as though the very play of Shakespeare, romantically translated into music, is unrolling. But compare the *libretto* to the text, and note how the unerring instinct of foreshortening on the part of the dramatist has accomplished this orbicular effect, yet has utterly changed the play.

To read it is to note how admirably he has understood that the action which in literature might appear as crudely rapid is in an operatic translation touched by some magical wand of slowness. In the *libretto* of *Otello*, the Moor has scarce spoken half a dozen sentences with Iago before the jealousy is suggested ; Desdemona and Otello are only permitted one brief passage of perfect understanding; the handkerchief incident passes with scarce any of the elaborate preparations of the play: and you finish a mere *reading* with a strange appreciation of a telescoped Shakespeare, and a little bewildered by this astonishing intuition of operatic perspective which can so delicately distinguish, as an expert jeweller, the real value of the diamond which he permits to remain rough.

Has Boito, then, chosen well in the ordering of his career? Is the lament of so many, that he has abandoned the mastery of music for the subordinate and—as they suppose—trivial vocation of *libretto* writer, indeed justified? In the eyes of these he has sacrificed himself uselessly. For a poet of opera is, as has before been hinted, a being apart from the poet of pure literature. He cannot even deliver his own soul, but must subject himself ever to alien needs and alien impositions. To all which

there is one answer to make: that a man does well to devote himself to that which he does best. The music of Boito is distinguished and delicate. His *Mefistofele* has splendid passages, in which his own poetry often gives to his own music a sort of sacred value; as in that tremendous suggestion when Faust watches Margherita in her moment of death. But, on the other hand, Boito is not a Verdi, and Boito is the only man whom Verdi has ever found to provide a *libretto* worthy of his genius. If this later music of Verdi were not so splendid an accomplishment, then one might haply hold that Boito, in sacrificing his music, was the victim of a sentimentality and a sense of hero-worship which debar him from sympathy. But, in the circumstances, the last praises are due to him for an action which contributes an incalculable glory to the Art of Opera. He has therein discovered a self-knowledge rare indeed in the world, and with it a resolution to abide by the consequences of such a knowledge which is still rarer: in a word, to do and to dare all things, even to forego the highest meed of personal fame, in his desire to fulfil the perfection of an art. Thus we do well, not only to consider him curiously as a Theory, but also to admire him very genuinely as a Man.

. . . . . A
JOURNALIST
. ON TOUR

CHARLES BURNEY, Mus. D., F.R.S., enjoyed that reverend fame which everywhere ensures respect and commands most of the dues of mere mortality. You would not say indeed that brilliant and ready wit, or the attractive charm of great genius, distinguished this learned and curious mind. A man indeed of undoubted humour he was, quick to perceive a ludicrous situation and—like most humorous men—independent in his judgments; a man, too, whose gifts were tempered by a quietude of thought involving a somewhat ponderous quietude of expression. Profoundly attached to the art of which he had chosen rather to make the æsthetic chronicle in its development and present position than to give practical and personal illustration, he showed in this determination a tenacity and firmness of purpose, a power of work, an endurance and an inimitable curiosity, which go to the makings of as original a character and mind as can well be conceived on the hither side of genius. Nor is it to the *History of Music* itself that the reader must turn for a satisfaction of his curiosity. That learned work elucidates, but slightly, if at all, what was in fact a very charming and attractive (if somewhat weighty) character. Men of Burney's stamp are often best learned and

best known by those fringes to their toil for which they may themselves cherish a minor admiration, but for which, compared to the central work of their lives, they might be supposed to possess a comparative contempt. And if one were persuaded to pursue inquiries, it is not to Burney's *History* that he should go, but to the accounts of Burney's tours in search of experience and information, which were published by way of preface to that *History*.

Of those accounts, by far the most engrossing and attractive is that which deals with the tour in Germany. To France he went and to Italy he went, with more or less preconceived conclusions. France was irredeemably, essentially bad: Italy essentially and indubitably good. To whatsoever part of France he travelled, he found the same gloomy level of musical frivolity; when he prattles about Italy he can even condescend to confuse the vocal and instrumental music of that nation with the music of its speech—as deplorable and foolish a commonplace as the world of thoughtlessness has ever inclined to accept. And, travelling among either nation, he judges according to these prejudices. Now, the odd thing is that Dr. Burney was gifted by nature with a remarkably

even and impartial mind; and it is certainly the most entertaining amusement of the Italian Tour to discover this impartiality for ever striving with his prejudices. But the amusement is not sufficiently various in this respect, and in the volume under consideration he had not yet developed his delightful egotism, his charming curiosity, his capacity for absorbing his minor details of information after the fashion—if it can be conceived—of a vital and monstrous amœba, qualities which show themselves mischievously, pompously, and keenly withal, upon every page of the German Tour. To come to the consideration of that tour, and before regarding it from its enlightening quality as to the writer's character, I am chiefly struck by his amazing endurance, and by the facility with which he apparently commanded access into the most difficult places of the great and inaccessible. I read page after page with a pervasive sense of such travelling hardship as seems incredible to the ways of these waning times. At one time the traveller lapses for days without visiting a bed; he jolts in uncomfortable waggons along roads that are nearly impassable; his driver loses the way in a dense storm of rain, and he camps under his cart

till the rise of dawn; yet, wet and fatigued, sleepless and unfed, he will blandly explain that his "curiosity would not permit him an instant's delay before presenting himself before" Lord So-and-so, who, as Gluck, or Bach, or some equally obscure person had informed him, "would be of the greatest usefulness to him in the prosecution of his musical researches." Or, wearied of jolting waggons, wearied of diabolical roads, he even seeks the refuge of a boat, trusting rather to the smooth mercifulness of the river than to the assured harshness of the way o' the earth. And at first fortune fickly smiled upon him; but presently a storm brewed, the rain poured down upon him as he vainly sought to nestle in some wretched straw, and his face was protected only by a pathetic and wantonly trivial umbrella. But the wind raged, his inconceivable protection was whirled into the flood; and it was with the most hateful difficulty that he presently reached land and again sought the shelter of the scorned waggon. These are specimen trials as he passed from town to town — good-humoured nevertheless, enthusiastic ever, and only temporarily depressed.

On the other hand, the living and persuasive

picture of the musical manners of his time that he was enabled thereby to paint seems to justify these hardships which he compelled himself to undergo. Only one, indeed, with the special inclinations of a journalist, as we know the man to be, could have accomplished Burney's feat. Wheresoever he drifted he kept his special purpose fairly and squarely before his mind's eye. Left alone in a room, he would whip out the pocket-book; the mirrors, the curtains, the tapestries, the general furniture—all were absorbed in the twinkling of an eye, all were left ready for reproduction. He was indefatigable in securing interviews with every musician, artist, and influential person who was willing to accord him such an interview, and who, above all, held the influence which was necessary to him for the furtherance of his cherished ambitions. Benda, Quantz, Farinelli, Mingotti, Klopstock, Faustina, Metastasio, above all, Gluck and Emmanuel Bach—by all he was received with characteristic enthusiasm. He was everywhere fêted; special concerts were organised in his honour; royalty itself, in the person of the Prince of Prussia, filled him with charming embarrassments: and all the while the busy pencil and pocket-book go on recording, recording. . . The

result lies in the development of a social picture, which is unique of its kind. By a peculiar sympathy Dr. Burney assuredly possessed the genius of what may loosely be called empirical expression—expression, that is, which conveys to readers a strong impression of the experiences which the writer has encountered with some keenness of sentiment. One enters Gluck's house in Paris with Dr. Burney, a little ashamed and uneasy, doubtful over the reception, for M. Gluck (we have heard) is not prone to excessive amiability. Yet he astonishes us by his peculiar graciousness towards ourselves; he even ventures upon some polite praises of England, where he learned, as he assures us, the art of writing naturally; he introduces Madame Gluck and Mdlle. Gluck, his niece, who is thin and has a charming voice; she sings through most of the *Alceste*, which persuades this appreciative doctor—and rightly—that M. Gluck is one of the greatest geniuses "of this or any other age." But this is only one miniature out of a host. There is the King of Prussia, the great Frederick, to one of whose concerts Dr. Burney is bidden at Potsdam, where His Majesty performed upon the flute, and exhibited all the qualities of a gifted and enlightened amateur;

there is M. Pothoff, the ringer of Amsterdam, whose exertions are so great that after ringing the daily carillon he must haste a-bed lest the perspiration should give him cold; there are all the singers and musicians who whisper their opinions in his ear, and hand him on with effusive letters one to another; he visits all the venerable beings—Mingotti to Faustina, for example—who not long before had shaken European audiences into enthusiasm; he flatters them, sympathises with them, reminds them of their past glories, and diligently records every ancedote that falls from their lips. And he opines that, if Italy be heaven-born, Germany has built herself a pleasure-house out of the resources of the earth.

Turning aside from the character of this fascinating gossip, it is impossible to read his general musical conclusions without admiration. Without fanaticism—"travel," he said, "has made me very tolerant"—he is implacable towards all those who, even in his time, were striving to wrest musical art from its legitimate way. Heartily despising, with Gluck, the hard and fast rules of convention-bound professors—"If I produce a fine effect what avails counterpoint?"—he equally scorned those

writers who fancied that to disobey rule was among the signs, not among the privileges, of genius. And therefore he set his face sternly against what, in the elementary fashion of the time, he calls "musical noise" rather than "musical melody." It was at Venice, however, that he made the discovery which proved to be the pivot of all his musical thought, and of that appreciation of his which was devoted exclusively to music. It was at Venice that he visited the Abate Martini, who, in company with "some other *dilettanti*," performed for him Marcello's "famous cantata," *Cassandra.* There he learned that, above all things, coherence and continuity of melodiousness are the sole qualities which distinguish great from merely restless and wantonly ambitious music. He notes, in a word, how this composer had entirely sacrificed the music to the poetry, "by changing the time or style of his movement at every new idea which occurs in the words." "This may, perhaps," he observes, "show a composer to be a very sensible man, but at the same time it must discover him to be of a very phlegmatic turn, and wholly free from the enthusiasm of a creative musical genius." But this most meritorious doctor thought better than he spoke when he added, "And indeed, since melody

has been allied to grace and fancy, musical disjointed thoughts on various subjects would be but ill received by the public." They told us, too, that Wagner was the "sensible man" who manufactured "musical disjointed thoughts." Admirable critic as he was, my journalist on tour would have known his Gluck better than to say so much to-day; for, as I have said, Gluck too had earned the privileges of disobedience, and of that fact Burney was, in *his* modernity, aware.

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THE death of Gounod was an event which should not have dismayed, though it could not but sadden, all who have the interests of music at heart. For the art of Gounod is a matter upon which we are capable of forming a complete and disinterested judgment, since at the hour of the artist's death there was no development, only continuance, to expect from any further work which he might be persuaded to create. Therefore, over such a deathbed one did but extend the sorry sympathies that follow the close of a career which is worthy of regrets, and which has been touched by its mortal fate. I have said that it should not be impossible to pass judgment on Gounod's art; yet it would be easy to be both unjust and too enthusiastic towards it, presenting, as it does, many points which can by no means justify our approval and many, on the other hand, to which we are willing to yield large sympathy and admiration. Gounod's music had, in the first place, a complete and unified character of its own; it was original and absolutely personal. If I do not reckon it as great, I assuredly reckon it as unique. There is nothing else like it in the world of music. It has a brilliance of its own, a fancy of its own, a sweetness of its own, and—when it happens to be cheap—a cheapness

that belongs to itself. But its first quality, its essential quality—and the applicability of the word will be easily understood—is its feminine sweetness. There is a masculine, a virile sweetness of music which is notable in the work of every great musician except in that of Gounod. His sweetness is not exactly weak, although it is by no means strong; it is not foolish, although it is not dictatorial: it is soft, elegant, fanciful, tender, smooth, fluent. Lacking strenuousness, it has a graceful litheness; wanting in power, it has a subtle fragrance of triumphant skill which is extremely persuasive. Now this quality of feminine sweetness which at times instils into Gounod's music a pervasive spirit that can only be described as angelic, is responsible also for the many limitations of that music. That it has a weary monotony of feeling none would be found to deny; that its thinness is often only disguised by its style; that it often expresses far less than its expression implies; that its body is often wire-drawn in order to compass a certain long straight line of accomplishment; that, though its fancy is a very Ariel in its gaiety of resource and variety of attitude, its imagination is poor and inflated; that, in a word, Gounod was a very singular and unique specimen of an artist

who cannot be called great in the best sense of the word: these are all facts which may not be gainsaid, but about which, perhaps, not quite a unanimous agreement may be expected.

It was in three musicianly capacities that Gounod appealed to the consideration of the musical public: as a writer of operatic music, as a writer of religious music, and as a writer of songs. And it is in the first capacity that he has achieved his broadest popularity. It has been unkindly suggested that *Faust* owed half its vogue to a legal omission between the buying and selling parties which practically gave the power into any manager's hands to produce the opera without the necessity of paying fees into the composer's pocket. There is certainly no necessity whatever for such a suggestion. *Faust* is the ideal opera of the populace. It is full of sweetness and pleasant melodiousness, qualities which the people, a body not without its intelligence, can easily appreciate, whence follows a worship of their own appreciation as part of Gounod's musical art. It is ever the practice of the average audience to read its approbation into the terms of the art which it is engaged in appraising. And therefore it was on its personal merits that *Faust* may be said to have reached its popularity.

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It deserved precisely that reward, it is so openly appreciable, so clearly and unhesitatingly frank in its obviousness. It has much beauty indeed, a beauty which not the most arrogant and cheapest of critics would be prepared altogether to deny; such a beauty pervades much of the Jewel Scene, and portions of the purely ecclesiastical music, a beauty of excessive tenderness and overwhelming celestial sweetness. Nor am I among those who are ready to apply any accusation of vulgarity to Gounod's general operatic writing. Portions of *Faust* sail nearest to this reproach, but even in its cheapest periods that opera never quite touches that degradation. Thin and obvious at times it may be, vulgar never. Upon a general view of Gounod's operatic writing, it is to be observed that, save for this single opera, he never really achieved a wide popularity. To my thinking, indeed, *Romeo et Juliette*, as it appeared in its final version, is to be ranked higher than *Faust*. The love-songs of the second and third acts—"Lêve-toi, soleil," and "Non, non, ce n'est pas le jour"—are unique specimens of Gounod's heavenly sweetness when his inspiration carried him to the production of his best work; and the noble recitatives of the last act are no less worthy of his finest moments. Passages such as

these sum up, in a minute space, the claims of Gounod as an operatic and dramatic musician. Because they deal with pure sentiment, with the simple and single emotions of tenderness and love, they are sweetly and intensely dramatic; in all other expression of dramatic emotion Gounod remains weak and listless. When he would be fearful, we sit blandly and refuse to be deceived by scholarly chromatics; when he would be artlessly gay, we beat time indifferently as the fluent waltzes trill forth. The fact is that Gounod has had too monotonous an outview upon his art to leave him with large dramatic opportunities; and it will be found that it was in those two operas chiefly, in which it was possible for him to adhere with dramatic fitness to this monotony, that he was able to secure success.

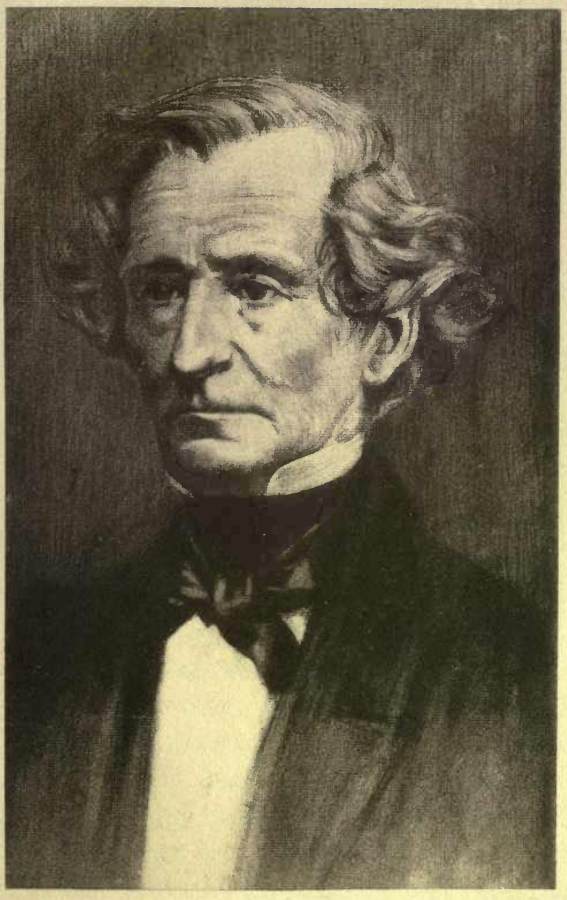
I turn from this writer of beautiful operatic, rather than of beautiful operas, to the writer of oratorio and other religious music. Here I am fain to cease from speech; but it must be owned that in this more solemn capacity, a vocation to which he believed himself especially called, he is on the whole a disappointment. He was ever indeed a thorough student, a musician out of whose power it was to write carelessly or without some

distinction, and he brought to his self-imposed task all his splendour of elegant fancy and accomplishment in orchestration, all the feathers to make the wings if only he might have created the body that should fly, all the accompaniments of grandiose effect. And then he produced an unconvincing result. How does Thackeray describe George the Fourth? "Silk stockings, padding, stays, a coat with frogs and a fur collar, a star and blue ribbon, under-waistcoats, more under-waistcoats, and then nothing." So I would analyse *The Redemption*. Although Gounod may be described rather as an amazingly accomplished student and scholar of the orchestra than as a musician of pure instrumental instinct, there is no work upon which he lavished so careful and laborious a study in its orchestration as upon this oratorio; and yet the effect is without any solid value. The inwardness which so deep an emanation as the emotion of mystery and solemnity should have proved was quite lacking. And though it has delightful moments, and though his Masses and *Mors et Vita* are also on occasion admirable, they are sicklied o'er with hopeless defect. But to leave this disappointing subject, it is impossible not to pay a tribute to the song-writer. Here his charm of refinement, and his momentary splendour

of inspiration found all their opportunity. He is not the greatest of song-writers; but in this exquisite little art he may be called truly great. He was a unique musician of his time, however, take him all in all. His style was in some respects and in certain conjunctions perfect of its kind; he was, in brief, a great contemporary, and he will stand alone in music. But he is not pre-eminent.

A GREAT CONTEMPORARY

. . THE "GRAND TRAITÉ"



AMONG the saddest and most hopeless books in the language is Haydon's Memoirs. Its revelation of a cherished ideal of self which was utterly unreasonable, futile, and untrue, and of a consequent tragedy climbing towards the awful crisis when, as it seems, the victim was suddenly faced by the discovery of his own imposture, and in the agony of realisation wiped out his life, is one of those histories of our kind of which a man makes haste to put away the memories.

It is passing strange that an examination of Berlioz's *Grand Traité d'Instrumentation et Orchestration Modernes* should strongly recall that great and impotent tragedy. But the reason lies in the contrast. Berlioz also was consumed with that passion for self, was filled with that triumphant belief and confidence in self, which compose the grinding pathos of Haydon's life. Like Haydon calling unto Haydon, Berlioz created an ideal Berlioz whose virtues he never ceased from celebrating, and over whose perfections he can never refrain from expressing a complete complacency. The passion of the two men was very similar, their manner of assertion was the same. Had it been possible for Haydon to declare himself through the medium of one great work of

art, tragedy there might have been in his life, essential pathos none. And it is precisely this summing up of self, this justification of self, which Berlioz has contrived to effect in the composition of his *Grand Traité.*

In the *Mémoires* and in the *Berlioz Intime* we have indeed a Berlioz and a Berlioz; each is amusing, and each is sovereignly magnificent. Each is, in a sense, a veritable human being, although the one is used to give the other the lie direct with extreme frequency. But if you desire to measure the true genius of Berlioz, the art of his criticism, the quality of his music, finally, his miraculous instinct for orchestration, it is to the *Grand Traité* that you must go. The book is, in the first place, all instrumental music known to him, in miniature. Ranging from violins to tomtoms, including betwixt these extremities some sixty instruments, he expounds, he illustrates, he rhapsodises, he warns. For his examples he brings specimens, selected (as one might sift gold dust from a barrel of sand) with the nicest sense of their value and of their bearing upon the point at issue, from the work of nearly every master of music—including Berlioz. Here then let us strike the first personal note of the book, its imperturb-

able and splendid pride. Since he did often achieve unique effects by specialised instrumentation, Berlioz here stands side by side with other masters who have also accomplished this achievement. Here are no apologetic notes which could only charm this lofty impudence into a vain humility—of all forms of humility the least tolerable. More, he will have no doubts nor hesitations over his judgments. He passes the great masters in review with a monumental sense of security. He dominates them with his personality. Not that they seem thereby to be any the less great; but it is Berlioz who for the moment is the master-mage, the master-alchemist, mingling in the crucible all these elemental greatnesses into a true philosopher's stone of orchestration.

There is a memorable sentence near the beginning of the *Mémoires*, recording the initial difficulty which Berlioz experienced in moulding the combination of note with note into an expression of fit harmony. He records the dry mechanical processes by which he toiled, until, on a stroke, in a flash, the secret, the mystery of the relations between the notes, entered upon his mind. The *Grand Traité* is a complete comment upon that singular experience. It reveals a wonderful

and superlative intimacy with accordant sound in general—may one term it sound in the flat?—and with sound specialised by instrumentation. He does not so much labour over musical utterances decorated with the last resources of a complex and far-reaching science,—he plays with them. He plays with them, indeed, in no spirit of frivolity or of irresponsibility; it is a solemn game, with puppets over whom he exercises an absolute control. He has his theories, and they are marshalled forth in defence or in prosecution. He reads scores, as it were, with a microscope; and you can picture the page of a score—his own or another's—with a thread (out of the plane of the music) from each note, the whole collection of threads gathered into his hand. Conceive him thus engaged, for it is time to speak of his more special effects; gathered in a hand poised over the page, he holds the threads that stretch to every note of the score. It is the score of *Alceste*: "Apollon est sensible à nos gémissements." A tremolo effect (*près du chevalet*) for the violins needs illustration. The Magian tightens the threads that emerge from the violin lines, and above the murmur of sound and the voice of the High Priest—"qu' inspire sa présence"—the

tremolo, for thirty-five bars, claims its own magnificent and terrible effects. Or the flute, and the most intimate characteristics of the flute, require explanation and example. It is *Orfeo* to which attention is now drawn, the ballet of the Troubled Spirit. By his peculiar emphasis, his comparisons, —which, in the figure, I call the tightening of the threads,—he directs attention to the perfect and lovely appropriateness of the flute for this ballet. To read the score anew under the inspiration of Berlioz's guidance is to appreciate with a summer freshness the ineffable beauties of that noble melody. The flute—the flute, and that alone, you now realise—can express its fading and spiritual pathos. And with what new mystery of music are you not made intimate by this realisation, what mystery of quality in sound, what shining shadow of difference between sound and sound, and—finally—what new sense of emotional appropriateness in the appreciation of these differences? It is Berlioz who accomplishes this, for whoso cares to acquaint himself with his genius. Therefore it is that in this *Traité* he achieves so surely the feat which he set out to do, that he persuades you into differentiating the orchestra as no other writer has ever done before or since.

In what quarter, then, does his personal power, his individual strength, lie? He owes it to his divine instinct, since by no other name can his appreciation of orchestral effects be called. That appreciation he learned in part by the study of the masters, but only in part. The rest of him is creator. Who (for example) but Berlioz could have suggested that wonderful effect for four hands on the piano quoted in the *Traité*, from his own *Fantaisie sur la Tempête*, the piano arpeggios rising to a trill and answered by descending arpeggios on flutes. Beethoven had used the piano with something of a fragmentary tendency towards the same effect; but his treatment does not more than suggest the passage from Berlioz. No; in instrumentation Berlioz is among the creators of modern music. His knowledge, distilled quintessentially into the *Traité*, is not only splendid, it is gloriously personal. It is an easy enough feat to acquaint oneself with the facts, as well as with the spirit, of the *Traité*. It is passing easy to admire the work and to appraise its rare value. But only in the mind of one man could the book have its full expansion and vitality—Berlioz or another Berlioz. For only to him, whose instinct was always with him, could

his sweeping knowledge of the orchestra bind his every fact into a lasting coherence. That is to write a work "for yourself and two or three friends" with a vengeance!

This, then, was his own, his special art; and having this accomplishment in so splendid a measure he is ever found venting his hatred for all that is imposture in his art, for all that is shoddy and shabby, with the vehemence of a true man. Any elaboration of the point is beside the question of the *Traité*; but it is interesting to note how his dominant and special art influenced and restrained all his judgment, all his selections, all his criticisms, and all his admirations which are there set forth. Gluck is his dearest master. He is never weary of emphasising his affection, his adoration for that musician; he selects from him in generous abundance where Mozart is only permitted two or three appearances. Then, after Gluck, Beethoven; and after Beethoven, Berlioz. And if it be urged that it is natural he should resort to the work of great instrumentalists in illustration of a treatise upon instrumentation, and that this fact scarce points to exclusive admirations, it may be answered that the *Traité* has certainly developed out of his general judgment of music rather than from an

academic resolution to write a book; and therefore it is that his selection is significant, for it demonstrates the overwhelming influence of this particular aspect of musical art upon his musical genius. Melody was doubtless much to him; but he was "careless of the single line." Times there are when it is easy to note in his scores that he tires of his own melodies; of his instrumentation—he gives one example here with twenty-nine different instruments—never.

The *Grand Traité*, then—to sum up—shows the true flower of Berlioz's genius. It is the text, the Holy Writ by which the Church of his own Music is justified, is made great and infallible. In it you have the writer, nervous, vehement, and lucid as air; the admirable critic, with his enchanting intolerances, his boundless admirations and enthusiasms; the musician and the creator; finally, the man—which is Hector Berlioz.

CALVÉ

IN the examination of any interpretative artist's success in interpretation, the first necessary matter is to inquire into the conventions by which that interpretation is safeguarded. There have been some traditions of the every-day stage; but the traditions of the operatic stage are manifold. For here is a union of two arts which are altogether distinct and vital of themselves—music and acting. Moreover, that union is so intimate, the one art acts, the other reacts, with so indissoluble an effect, that the problem of proportion in the mixture is very naturally one upon which there should be an extensive variety of opinions. And there has been such a variety of opinions; until out of the many methods which were prevalent in the middle of the last century, when school rivalled school, each with its favourite musicians, there gradually arose one mighty and seemingly immovable manner which imposed itself upon the times. From this convention man gradually sucked all vitality. The opera of our great-grandfathers became the occasion for exhibitions of beautiful voice-production and nothing more. The drama, such as it was, was interpreted according to set rules, which were spiritlessly but sedulously reverenced, much as a snail might be supposed to reverence his shell.

CALVÉ The thing was there, a convenient environment, but still a veritable house of enchantment for purposes of energetic art. There were tricks of the heaving bosom, signed and sealed and made honourable by the act of sovereign singers; there were tricks of the disposable train, of the drooping eyelids, of the sinking form, of the poised arm—all the dead emptiness of what once might have been a grand classical tradition. Even Mozart, more than a century ago, perceived the hollowness of operatic stage-forms when he crept behind his Zerlina to surprise her into a natural scream. . . Let me not be hard upon the ancient manners; the science—let M. Maurel forgive the word as applied to the past—of voice-production, of pure vocal beauty, was, after all, a fair and lovely ambition. What though your Tietjens of some years ago smiled an empty smile, if she sang a lovely song? What though our Albani shakes abroad a meaningless kerchief, if she proclaim the possession of a vocal style? We cannot be convinced by the one fascination; we can be allured by the other charm.

When now the methods of the conventional past on the operatic stage were growing very old and very stale, men began to inquire of one another

if a new mixture of the elements were not possible. The operatic drama was dead as Sisera; and fresh young singers were beginning to lose the art of taking pains. A somewhat deplorable hesitancy and tremulousness seemed to prevail; and one began to wonder if haply the death of the opera were about to react and effect the death of the voice. Then a discovery was made. The pure method, the absolute standard of voice-production, was gradually assuming the character of a forgotten secret; and, upon the verge of death, the voice claimed a new and unexpected lease of life. Drama upon the operatic stage should be revitalised, and a portion of its new energy should be infused into the dying voice. The voice—to be wildly metaphorical—was if possible to be endued with a kind of gesture and action. As a very brief explanation of these modern tenets this will, for my purpose, suffice; and amongst men their greatest exponent, as I elsewhere explain, is M. Maurel, amongst women Madame Calvé.

She is an incomparable vocal actress. Her voice is in itself beautiful; but her method of using her voice may be described only by the single word "dramatic." As Santuzza that voice is passionate, full, native, overwhelming; as the

CALVÉ Priestess in Bizet's *Pêcheurs des Perles* it is solemn and nobly majestic; as Ofelia in Thomas's *Amleto* it is infinitely tender and pathetic; as Carmen it is a whirl of emotion, changeful and wide-sweeping. Notice that the characters here mentioned are identified with the voice: that is hyperbole, but it is an exaggeration to be condoned. Calvé's movement is, it is also true, finely attuned to the motion of the voice, swift with its swiftness, solemn with its majesty; and thus she effects an extraordinary unity of accomplishment. The voice distracts you from no preponderance of bodily activity; the weakness of action distracts you from no undue effort of the voice. Unlike M. Maurel, although closely identified with his principles, she never disposes one to imagine her self-critical. Her movement is assuredly not the spontaneous impulse of the moment; its art is too finely proportioned to deceive a thoughtful mind into any such belief; yet it has a spontaneousness in appearance; and not being, in point of fact, impulsive, it therefore also has classical persuasions, the persuasions of a concealed self-consciousness. The joy of it rests in the fact that it is all so vital. Instead of the soothing and average sensations aroused by the pure exercise

of a beautiful voice, this is a combination of powers that stir one with the sense of a personal life, of a history and an intelligence seated behind the voice, and prompting its utterances. The operatic singer changes from a machine into a living and sentient being. You no longer smile to think that love or hate should be delivered through appointed harmonies and through certain vexed contrapuntal regulations. The divinely ridiculous convention which proclaimed such a situation possible is now even made to appear likely. Calvé complains in common time, or she dies in an *Adagio Religioso*, and the feelings of common sense are no longer outraged, to be appeased only by the beauty of environment.

Thus to make opera seem probable is to demonstrate herself an artist of singular power. But I am not at all convinced that the separation of her united arts would leave her supremacy unshaken. She acts operatically with convincing skill; I should hesitate to think that she could be convincing on every stage. She has a remarkably beautiful voice ; there are singers with voices equally beautiful. But as a vocally dramatic artist she stands where no modern operatic actress can approach her. Shut your eyes, and listen to her as she

CALVÉ enters upon any dramatic circumstance of opera, and you can picture her pose, her gesture, her facial expression. You will not probably picture her aright; but she has conveyed a picturesque situation vocally, where, perhaps, many such situations were possible; and that is an accomplishment which justifies beyond all question the ambitions of that modern operatic school of which M. Maurel has been the acknowledged leader. At the same time it does not destroy the justifications of the past. But the future, and the fresh young vitality of the present, are with it. And it is pleasant to think that man is still young.

. . . A
POPULAR
. SINGER

A POPULAR SINGER

POPULARITY, we are assured, is no test of art. The quality that makes for the popularity of an artist is a thing apart from the quality which crowns him with his artistic title. Mr. Rudyard Kipling, for example, is popular; and so is Sir Lewis Morris. These two have a common quality; and the art of the one, the futility of the other, stand outside this participation. You would not say that the accident of popularity ascribed any essential vulgarity to the build of any given intellect; but it is clear that a communication has passed from such an intellect into the home of essential vulgarity. The public is touched; the artist's record (it is possible) remains clean. Of Mr. Charles Santley, then, there is this to be said at the outset: he is emphatically a popular singer. Whatsoever he sings for the public touches his audience. Whether he communicate through the medium of severe oratorio or of the dreadful modern ballad, his triumph is equally secure. The most unknowing, the most thoughtless, the vulgarest type of sentimentalist confesses to emotion in company with the musician. The fact comes near to demonstrating the nature of that quality which —apart from art, apart from knowledge, apart from nobility of culture—dowers sometimes the

A POPULAR SINGER

artist, sometimes the man in the street, with the perilous reward of popularity. It is mostly histrionic capability of a singularly mutable character, as it were adapting itself universally and variously to modern dispositions. If the popular idol be in truth an artist, his sympathy touches artist and mob alike; if he be a mere charlatan, the mob alone is his precious acquisition. But for popularity the mob suffices. Now, this histrionic capability, this simultaneous yet various effectiveness, is among the most potent, as it is among the most obvious, of Mr. Santley's gifts. When he sings, though his song be some snatch of common sentiment, some vile assemblage of phrases conventionalised from the stray leasings of a master's music—as the common drawing-room song of to-day often is—he seems in a sense to assume the thing into his personality. You turn with loathing from the tenth-rate music; but—even apart from the singer's method—the intelligent listener is moved by that personal effect; while for the common public, which rejoices and is exceeding glad over tenth-rate art, the double combination of satisfied taste and a sympathetic personality fills it with a sincere rapture.

Mr. Santley, then, is a popular singer; a useful

if not a noble title. But he is more: he is an artist. He is not of the latest singing generation; he belongs to an earlier and assuredly to a simpler school, of which he is nearly the last representative. It is engrossingly unpleasant to note that the forgetfulness of simplicity, which in these times has corrupted other arts, has not avoided the art of singing. Singers, too, have forgotten this truth: that after platitude comes obscurity, and after obscurity simplicity. In these days we are so enamoured of the second phase that we proudly forego the third. To us the darkling ways of obscurity image our own consummate cleverness. We strain, we grimace, we pose, we tie ourselves into knots; and withal we despise the old habit which, passing beyond strain and grimace and pose and self-consciousness, begat an effect at once shapely and uncomplex. Mr. Santley's method persuades us of these truths. He produces his voice with an apparent simplicity, a seeming facility, which his contemporary singers only envy when they seek to do likewise; for it is then that they encounter the difficulties of his achievement. They who make vain display of the arduousness of their art before a gaping public—a public that admires the process and recks naught

of the perfect result—confess a certain contempt for the graceful ease with which Mr. Santley accomplishes the public practice of his art. All the strain, all the training, which he, acting on the true method of a singing-school now moribund, reserves for the closet, until he has attained that perfection which alone in his own eyes justifies his public appearances, these others prefer to exhibit to the whole world. And therein both they and he find the meed they seek: they in the ignorant admiration of effort on the part of the vulgar; he in the genuine praise of result on the part of the learned. It is this which separates him from many contemporary artists, and which awards to him, while yet alive, the praises which posterity is used to assign to a great past. The name of Mario is fast passing into the dim language of tradition; yet with him Mr. Santley sang, and it is of this school (of which Mario was perhaps the most conspicuous member) that Mr. Santley was the disciple, and is very nearly the sole surviving master.

The career of Mr. Santley has been long; and though his years number but threescore, he is past his golden jubilee as a singer. During that long passage of time his public activity has been

merely surprising; for vigour has marked his general life, as it marks his every gesture, his every action, his every mutation in his every separate public performance. In opera, in oratorio, in sacred music, in the common ballad, in the ubiquitous love-song, in the pseudo-pathetic naval or military anecdote, his energy has been equally prominent and triumphant. In opera, indeed, his success formerly proved most decisive, and it is generally believed that to opera his inclination chiefly leans. Moreover, unlike the vague and alien ambitions away from their own art entertained by so many artists, in him that inclination is amply justified. He has the double gift, which the gods so rarely vouchsafe to men, of voice and temperament. If you possess temperament you may prove yourself eminently successful in the imitative arts, whether you be a Minor Poet or a Prominent Actor. And if you be gifted with voice and with naught else, it is sometimes within your power to cast the ducal world at your feet, and familiarly to handle the champagne-glasses of marchionesses. But what if the kind divinities mould you in so gracious a gust of benevolence that, after stringing the chords of your throat into delicate perfections, they add to the courses of your blood the tempera-

ment of the veritable actor, and therewith the potent gifts of a catholic sympathy? These were gifts awarded to Mr. Santley; of whom, however, it is not yet on public record that he has bartered their worth for the social and petty triumphs which have overbalanced so many of his profession. Mr. Santley, then, can act. It is not pretended that he is a Salvini, nor even that his merely physical powers of simulation are of a super-eminent character. The art of operatic acting is something different from the art of play acting. In the first the double demand upon the voice and upon the body divides the responsibilities; while part of the simulation which in the second must be assigned to the features, the gestures, the motions of the limbs, is in the first assimilated by the sympathetic voice. It is therefore as an operatic actor that Mr. Santley is here criticised. He has fulfilled the chief baritone parts in most well-known early operas, and in all he has been successful. His method of acting, like his method of singing, was frank, free, devoid of the minor and vacuous conventions. He had not, indeed, that extreme delicacy of proportional instinct which another baritone, M. Maurel—Mr. Santley's very peculiar rival—exhibits on the operatic stage. M.

Maurel's histrionic art is more carefully cultivated, Mr. Santley's more native; and, though Mr. Santley is perhaps more direct, more immediately persuasive, M. Maurel's conscious and exquisite gracefulness and appreciation wield an abiding influence which the other somewhat lacks. It is in the concert-room, in the pure exercise of singing, that M. Maurel accepts a second if a proximate place. In oratorio — to conclude — Mr. Santley's most personal success centres in his rendering of the music of *Elijah*. The oratorio is certainly not the finest, though it be the most ambitious, of Mendelssohn's works. But no musician has found so powerful a special pleader for his little sins as Mendelssohn has discovered in Mr. Santley. With this singer, whose prominent characteristic is sincerity,—sincerity, that is, for the hour of art, —all that to another less vehemently imitative, versatile, and sympathetic artist might have appeared a little hollow is overwhelmed, nay—one might say without exaggeration—annihilated.

ROSSINI

ROSSINI

THE recent occurrence of the centenary of Rossini's birth recalls a curious musical phase—scarce a musical movement—touching at either side two memorable musical epochs. The school of the eighteenth century, that in its day had achieved a superlative beauty in forms then instinct with vitality, lay on its deathbed. The time was come for change, but the hour of discovery had not yet dawned. Mozart, Gluck, Bach, Handel, had passed, and the result of their labours had been gathered into the House Beautiful of art. Wagner, and the later Verdi and the greatest names of the modern school were still unsuspected of mortality. But the world must have its music; and if the musicians "of the world" sleep with the past, or have not yet opened their eyes to the future, the musicians of a locality must step into the vacant place. It is almost a truism to explain that the greatest music—like all great art—must needs be catholic not national: cosmopolitan not local. Of what provincialism shall you convict *Ombra mai fu*—among the loveliest of Handel's melodies — or *Batti, batti*, or the chaconne of *Alceste*? Where is their sign of nationality, their parish trade-mark? They are things of sheer beauty, of a most perfect style, yet—save for the

conventional Handelian finish—absolutely without manner. And therein they find their supremacy. Coming again to modern music — to make a sudden selection—what less than catholicity marks the genius of Verdi's *Ora e per sempre addio*, or Wagner's Good Friday music? Unlike, in nearly every sense, the great music of last century, the two periods show this common note of universality. Now, the popular school which came to bridge over the two epochs, which touches Mozart on the one side and the Verdi of *Aïda* on the other, just lacked this catholic quality; and it is of this school that Rossini stands forth the most conspicuous representative. It becomes necessary to make some such general scholastic separation for a better historical vision. Beethoven, for example, though of this period, belongs to no school, and stands apart in a solitude which no other musician has violated. His music, the outcome of nothing, the pioneer of nothing — despite the claims of Wagner himself—was, on its own most personal merits, destined to endure the austerest tests of immortality.

Of Rossini there is this to say: that he is an almost unrivalled master of tune. The distinction between tune and melody is easy in illustration,

difficult in verbal definition. Tune is melody a little overripe. The adjectives that are applicable to melody are of an order altogether different from those applicable to tune. You associate tune with a suspicion of slang; melody demands the language of literature. The quality, for instance, that gives melody the title of "beautiful" inspires you to call a tune "fetching." Gluck never wrote a "tune" in his life; Rossini seldom wrote pure melody. And here is discovered his note of provincialism. Tunes are chiefly of a locality. The music-hall tune that flies over the streets of London with the celerity of an affection is stifled to death in the not more musical town of Manchester. It depends for life upon places, upon seasons, and upon times; and thereafter it dies. It is to be observed withal that Rossini's tunes are among the best that have been produced. They have every quality save the highest. They are gay, they are exuberant, they have ease and fluency and lilt; their rapidity is inspiring and their versatility — sufficient. Take the second movement in the overture to *Tancredi*, or the opening movement of the first act, or the well-known *Zitti, zitti* of *Il Barbiere*, as specimens. They rollick with movement, they fly. Yet it would be impossible to confuse them with melody.

They lack the sober construction, the artful simplicity, the purity of effect, which belongs to melody and to melody alone. Occasionally, indeed, Rossini forewent his passion for tune; as in that opening movement of the overture to *Semiramide* which later comes to be embodied in the opera itself. It is melody, though not of the highest kind; it has the slightest suspicion of *bourgeois* sentimentality. Compare it for a moment to *Voiche sapete*, and a doubt is impossible. The Mozart is perfectly simple, divinely so: the Rossini is not more than merely simple, and has self-consciousness—as if it were a flower sprinkled with patchouli. For the day of Rossini took the turn of the wheel when the times were beginning to forget simplicity. Men were getting to be—they now are—frightened of it. It was as though the capacity to sift simplicity from commonplace was dulling in the world, and a consequent anxiety among men to avoid platitudes drove simplicity to drink. In letters the culmination was Browning; in music the glorious Wagner.

Rossini's popularity as a writer of opera has long been on the wane; and this was perhaps inevitable, since there is no form of composition which gives place to novelty so quickly as this.

Yet one records it not without regret. It is true that Rossini's capabilities as an instrumentalist were rather showy and exciting than inspiring and inspired, that his attempts to terrorise are merely laughable, that his talent for the *crescendo* was so singular that he scarce ever varied his effects in any two operas of his own composition ; true that he is very often vulgar, and that his thinness is occasionally threadbare ; yet it would not be easy to find another series of compositions so abounding in vitality, in quickness, in flash, in entertainment. It was impossible for Rossini to be dull. Meretricious he might be ; tedious he could not be. Where, for the quality here named, could a more splendid song be found than that amazing song of *Il Barbiere—Ah ! bravo Figaro* ? It is said that the composer himself was used to sing it with an *abandon* that alone convinced you of the quality of the piece. It would have been impossible to assume such a manner in the face of music less brilliant. He forgot any common relations—as in this song they should be forgotten — between accompaniment and voice ; he hammered out the ringing phrases of repetition on his piano as, with his big head thrown back, and possessed of a fury of gaiety, he uplifted his voice on those expres-

sively curt cries, "Figaro sù, Figaro giù, Figaro là, Figaro quà," and *da capo*. It is in such brilliant experiments that you have the man at his best, and it is therewith sad to meditate certain of our modern preferences. He is at his worst—and a very bad worst that can be—when he essays sentimentality. The *Cujus Animam*, for example, of his *Stabat Mater* has no rival for absolute cheapness among the work of men of equal talents. To conclude, this was a musician who, though he cannot rank among the great composers of the world, may yet be called the great composer of a nation. His work smells of his native soil. He is local, provincial, parochial, what you will,—but for that vital quality of quickness and brilliancy let him be forgiven much.

M. MAUREL . AND HIS . .SCHOOL

IN the House of Art there are many mansions; and as multitudinous as those mansions are the paths that lead thereto. The journey being the most personal matter in the world, its records of labour and victory are rightly buried in the breasts of the wise. Now and again an artist condescends to explain his development; but vanity and the glamour of reminiscence play so disastrous a havoc with the naked truth, that such explanations are most often mere unconscious experiments in fiction. Man can only guess the artistic preparation from the artistic completion; and it is from a judgment upon such a completion that you determine M. Maurel to be an artist of exquisite preparations. He has taken infinite pains with himself; he has trained to a consummation of culture; he has planted himself in a hothouse, and moulded his growth into superb sinuosities—the word shall presently be justified. In every modulation of his voice, in every step upon the boards, in every turn of the neck, in every pose of that lithe body, in every twist and trick of those graceful hands, the whole artist seems to be the delicate result of a forethoughtfulness microscopically vigilant. He has reached an absolute of self-control. So separate in him

are the watching personality and the simulating personality that in a very rhapsody of song he makes you aware of a critical Maurel—an astral variant—checking, encouraging, applauding and dubious, following the steps of Maurel the actor and singer, handling that artist's gullet and prompting at every pause. Thus is an audience convinced, yet perplexed, by the witness of a simultaneous self-consciousness and self-abandonment. The method forestalls criticism. If, by rare disaster, the artist should stumble over his work, he immediately persuades to forgiveness by his own subtly-treated yet obvious deprecation. It is a deprecation expressed haply by the most evanescent of pauses, by the hair's-breadth lift of the eyebrow, by the motion of a single finger. Yet these trifles light as air effect that instant separation of personality which is the most amazing note of M. Maurel's exquisite art. Of course, he is artificial, he is precious, and his work reeks of the lamp; it is too careful for spontaneity, too scholastic for perfect romance. To a career which demands temperament before brains, emotion before intelligence, M. Maurel gives more mind than heart, more thoughtfulness than feeling. Nevertheless, he is popular.

In spite of his study, in spite of his artistic reverence, in spite of his devotion to fine distinctions, the man is popular: but not for these qualities. One inclines to attribute that popularity rather to the obvious graces of his person than to an intelligent appreciation of his greatness.

Separate in him simulation and song, and you shall find imperfection in each; but as an operatic actor his rival is yet to find. In this respect he is as certainly the pioneer of a new school as Mr. Santley is the last disciple of an old. Of old, men resolved to sing — and they sang. The accompaniment of acting either they coldly welcomed as an accidental opportunity of effectiveness, or they tolerated as a conventional method of inexpressive expression. They all sang. But there was a double school of operatic acting. Men of the one — to be explicit — used the stage as a foil to their vocal performance. They made no careful study of histrionic effect; they trusted to the inspiration of the moment; conditionally upon the understanding that the voice production was to be the essential matter, they raised the art of acting to a certain secondary importance in opera. The other school frankly got rid of acting by the substitution of a con-

ventional code; fixed gesture was assigned to every emotional display. Then set in the reign of the lace handkerchief, the heaving bosom, the tripping step, the quiver from the shoulders with both hands laid flatly on the heart: all those tricks, those apologies for simulation, of which Madame Albani is perhaps the greatest modern exponent. M. Maurel belongs to neither discipleship. By the help of his astonishing self-appreciation he utilises his very defects. He has insight into this modern truth: that it is possible to be a moderately perfect singer and a moderately perfect actor, and yet be, in a new sense, an absolutely perfect interpreter of opera. He rightly appraised the artistic effect of a new proportional division between voice and action; and he presently set about developing the art of dramatic vocalisation. From his standpoint, the voice is still the chief consideration; but not for its own sake. Of old it was graduated by the common differences of tone and power well known to every writer and singer of music. In M. Maurel's hands its differences are shaded by each emotional change of music and words. With such delicate artifice does this singer blind you to the facts of his vocal weakness

—and such weakness happens to exist—that his unexpected changes of manner, his various and versatile methods of production, his subtle commingling of pure sound with superadded action translated into sound, are accepted by the general audience as absolute compensation for a lack that usually goes altogether undetected. Such an art could not be other than self-conscious, since it requires at every turn so wary a regard, so meditative a contemplation. And therefore, despite its freshness and the possibilities to which M. Maurel's followers may put it, it is not, and cannot be, one of the highest forms of art. It is touched too pressingly by the cold finger of science; it has its analogies with mixed mathematics.

His best title to operatic fame is to be found in his interpretation of Boito's Iago. It has been complained that here is not the Iago of Shakespeare; it has been urged that the villain is now too courtly, too graceful, too much the gentleman—that his exquisite manners, his thoughtful posing, his elegances of step and gesture are flatly opposed to the Shakespearean tradition. But these qualities happen to harmonise with a careful and intellectual design. Because he so suavely

avoids violence and gnashing of teeth, because he strives to decorate Iago with every resource of beauty of which he is aware, therefore is the characteristic effect the more engrossingly diabolical. It is in this part, too, that he finds his full vocal opportunities; to chance upon the merest reminiscence by way of illustration, his rendering of *Era con Cassio* is a very enviable dramatic achievement. It is the passage wherein Iago whispers to Othello the lying invention of Cassio's dream. The music, melodious and distinguished by a kind of multitudinous unity—the unity of a sea-wave separable into infinitesimal particles—is among Verdi's most notable dramatic feats, and as such it is perfectly apprehended and realised by Verdi's baritone.

In the concert-room M. Maurel betrays the limitations of his voice. He is here debarred the opportunity of explaining to you, just at the moment when a nameless flaw in his singing arouses the slumbering critic, that he is, after all, a master of elegance. He leaves his magic armour aside, and comes forth in common steel. He proves, indeed, that he has a fine, a various voice, a voice that can adapt to change; but not a voice to reach where no words can wander, not

a voice to capture and encage the very soul's soul. There have been voices capable of so triumphing; and when you discover such a one, then is it that a finished manner pales to the merest formalism by the side of inspiration; then may one note the difference between the genius that can slowly roll a stone to the top of a hill, and the genius that, set by God in the beginning of things on the hilltop (or thereabouts, since all men must work), can send the stone down with sound and fury into accumulating ratios of speed. True, the first feat is probably the most laborious, but in the accomplishment of the second the man has the unique advantage of beginning high. M. Maurel did not begin high. He was no child of nature, lisping in numbers, for the numbers came. He belongs rather to the order of critics than of creators; but his critical faculty in his own line happens to be so exceptional that he has learned positive doctrine from it. Lessing used to say that he wrote drama because he knew how it should not be written; of M. Maurel it may be also said that he is a perfect operatic actor, because his critical intelligence demonstrates to him at all points how opera should not be interpreted. But

when you consider native work, it becomes at once possible to assign a limitation. No amount of critical faculty can teach a man to write lyric verse above a certain level; no amount of vocal intelligence can give to M. Maurel's mere vocal performance the uncommon victories of musical lyric rapture. The organ is not there; the throat, nobly strung as it is, has not been fashioned into the ultimate delicacies. Therefore M. Maurel, dramatic and vocal critic, content with naught but pre-eminence, took his fate into his own hands, and fashioned a beautiful art for himself. A beautiful art, truly: perhaps faultily faultless, sometimes splendidly null, always icily regular, but beautiful with a classic beauty.

. "IL DON
GIOVANNI"

"IL DON GIOVANNI"

To step back a century in music, to realise Mozart, is I know not how welcome a mutation, how rapturous an experience; and to estray from the wilderness of modern mimicries of Wagner into the dew-fed pastures of *Don Giovanni* is to touch that experience upon the consummate point of refinement. Of the first the memory is willingly forgetful; upon the second she eagerly declines, for its refreshment, for the perfect quality of its achievement, for its ultimate possibility or musical delight. The very story has in it a golden glamour of literary romance, treated, even as the despised Da Ponte treated it, in bold and large characters, without repetition and niggling superfluities, without wearisome explanation and laborious detail. But, as translated into musical romance by Mozart, the literary possibility is realised in a tenfold intensity. In *libretto* the Don may be anything: his passions are haply vulgar lusts, his desertions mere ruffianism, his philanderings the unlovely ficklenesses of the common schemer. All this, and more than all this, the simple recital may imply. Yet in the musical development of his character — a development constrained by the austere laws of absolute music, leashed and bound by the sternest submission to the highest form of

any art—the intimate and subtlest emotions of the character are vitalised beneath these superficial possibilities. The Don is then a gentleman—intriguing, dissolute, light-hearted, quarrelsome, pleasure-seeking, but—a gentleman, and, so far as one may judge, merely by reason of the turn of the music which Mozart has condescended to entrust to his conscience. From the last note of that wonderful overture down to the close of the Finale—itself among the most emotionally consummate feats of musical art—the Don steps with a perfect gracefulness and high-mannered culture, while about him, through the mouths of the subordinates to the drama, the musical setting attends his steps in relief, in emphasis, or in withdrawal, according as the musically dramatic needs of the scheme call for the one or the other.

We are in the morning-time of melody, at its most gracious hour of freshness, before the dust of the day has been blown upon its young delights. And a melody how versatile, how various, how endless in its change, how simple in its completeness! From the opening song of Leporello you are made aware of it—that song with its irresolute resolution expressed within the circle of so refined a symmetry, so delicate an equipoise; so that the

quavers of his "Nò—nò—nò—nò—nò—nò," and the long notes of his "non voglio più servir" to a nicety declare his humour, that delights in the pleasures of a dissolute service, and is momently conquered by its pains. It is a gay and humorous prelude, fitting for that which is to follow. And in that which is to follow, how shall you mentally imagine the ideal Don Giovanni, the worthy exponent of this morning music? He must have presence and grace. I picture him tall, and of an attractive slimness. The face is indeed a little melancholy, to put upon his nature that contradictory point which in the eye of woman lends to the man some refined and super-sensuous allurement. His dress, without superfluous ornament, proclaims the finish of his taste in this as in all things. His hair, I insist upon it, is black; I would give him those grey eyes that seem to hint no danger to the timid and approaching virgin; his chin falls clear in a longish curve from the underlip that, in the gentlest degree, stands defectively prominent, and (for hair upon his face) he wears a black moustache and a pointed black beard. His voice is capable of tenderness and of fearlessness; his movements shall ever be exquisite; and his face (however insincere in motive)

plays the sensitive traitor to every emotion that it is his whim to betray. In the art of intrigue, his hands know every passionate surrender, every hesitant restraint. I do not preach upon the hollowness of his heart, for the morality of the man, as he treads the boards thus desperately amorous, thus passionately resolute, thus humorously careless, thus deprecatingly disdainful, thus fearless of the last terrors, is a thing of naught. He is Mozart's Don Juan, and for us that suffices.

By a rare piece of insight on the part of his musical creator, he is a gradual revelation. You first win some vision of him through the bars of Leporello's mad song, and when at last he enters it is in the dark. That also is to the purpose, for if a gentleman may ever struggle in gallantry with a lady, it should be in the dark, and it is also well that he should retire when in the struggle he is worsted. His first movements, his duel and his disappearance, seem all by way of preparation. For a brief moment he will return to discover himself embarked upon an unconscious intrigue with a mistress, and it is now that from Leporello more tidings are brought of his brilliant manners, when you learn that Spain is of all lands the country of his most golden harvest. "Ma,"

sings the lackey, on a long note that rolls upon the tongue, "ma, in Ispagna, son già mille e trè." The preparation, then, is nearly complete; you are on the tiptoe of expectation for some dramatic experience of a more personal character: in brief, you await the Don. Therewith a flood of quick melody in immediate prelude—the music of a country marriage—and for the head and front of it, Zerlina. She and the Cavalier remain alone—"alfin siam liberati, Zerlinetta gentil," he sings, and the amorous recitative throbs with melodious foreshadowings. Then forth from that prelude steal the primal notes of the entreaty, "Là ci darem la mano," dripping the central sweetness of music, in its rising and falling, in its harmonious and consistent change, in its invitation, and in the answer to that invitation; the notes quicken as the intensity deepens; "non son più forte" she sings in a passionate repetition of quick phrases which are again transported to a higher level and carried to a brief pause, when resistance is over, and the thing ends in a quick and rapturous duet. The Don remains conqueror. It is the justification of his repute; and as the delicate creature, with a nobility of condescension, and the bare hint of melancholy upon his smile, bends to Zerlina and

leads her away, he persuades even the virtuous that, in all despite, his existence is excused by the sheer beauty of his expression. It is his whim now to preface the completion of his conquest by a multitude of decorative surroundings, and Zerlina shall dance to his Cavalier, in the minuet which, I like to think, he himself composed for the ceremony. He dances with a finished gracefulness, and Zerlina is made to feel a subordination to his accomplishment as he leads her through the steps. The slow and stately dance has a transparent simplicity of form, which shall not distract one lover from the other, and shall also enchain, by its rhythmical passage, the desired attention of the listeners; thus is it possible that the two may steal unknown from the throng of dancers. But the crisis has been miscalculated; for Zerlina has sung her *Batti, batti,* to her Masetto, and, with the divine phrases of that love-song in her ear, the memory of *Là ci darem* has something faded. Through that love-song, then, the Cavalier has found his own conqueror, and from this point his overshadowing begins. It is as though he is pitted against Zerlina in a musical struggle for bare existence. You almost look for his triumph, indeed, after his serenade, *Deh! vieni alla finestra,*

but Zerlina has in reserve her *Vedrai carino* for Masetto, and it is clear that the Commandant approaches. With the opening of that stupendous Statue-Music, from the point where Leporello in a frenzy of terror announces, "l'uom di sasso, l'uomo bianco," the drama drifts into tragedy, and the golden melody is turned in the Cavalier's throat to something sterner, as he sings his fearless song before he takes the Statue's hand. Thenceforth my interest in him somewhat wanes; he should have died the gentleman. That melancholy face should have frozen into death without distortion; that tall, slim body should have fallen prone without writhing upon its way to hell. The fault lay not with Mozart, who struggles against Da Ponte's interpretation, and has put a keen edge of refinement upon the hero's terror; indeed, the opera closes as only Mozart could end it; but it is certain that the Don Juan of Mozart's music stands at the finish a little apart from the Don Juan of Da Ponte's book.

PLAIN SONG

ALTHOUGH we may guess dimly that the music of a period in some sense reflects its emotional character, philosophy has not yet revealed to us a science of comparative musical tests. The character of the two or three generations which overspanned the eighteenth century we know; we know, too, the character of the music which that century produced; and we link the two by an inseparable relation. Yet, in this instance, it may be questioned if we should have guessed one character from a knowledge of the other; and this because the severe scholasticism of that music imprisoned in the shackles of a noble law the very emotions of which it was the product. These are subtly hidden under the dominion of legitimate harmony and restrained counterpoint, and in them are to be found the differences that lie between a master's work and the work of a mere Kapellmeister. To the untutored ear — the ear that listens yet transmits nothing to the alert mind—a sonata by Mozart, and a sonata by the musician in the street (provided his harmonic kit be sufficiently ample) will carry no more than an impression of symmetry and submission, because to such an audience the emotional beauty of the Mozart lies drowned in the overwhelming obviousness of

PLAIN SONG

that symmetry and submission. The emotional character of more recent generations is easier of discovery from a knowledge of their characteristic music. And this because the emotion seems to us moderns more obviously expressed. We have developed, at the expense of much else that the world can ill spare, a more poignant musical note. This is to speak in averages; for none can forget such a passage in Gluck's *Alceste* as "To die for the beloved one," than which no more piercingly sad musical expression, save, perhaps, the "Amfortas" *motif* of *Parsifal* and some of Tschaikowsky's later music, has ever, perhaps, been revealed to any musician. Nevertheless, though this century-old composition may be criticised as a higher flight of tragedy than most things since attained, we moderns in this respect hang longer on the wing. And in that achievement—the unclothing, as it were, of our musical emotions; their exhibition in the nude — the emotional tendency of the times becomes more recognisable through the music that our times have produced. Philosophy, I have said, has done nothing to invent comparative musical tests of contemporary tendencies. Pioneering, therefore, upon such a discovery, as to the character of times

that have long become historical, and are rapidly becoming fabulous, we are supported by this sole truth: that the more fully we can separate law from emotion, catchword (if you will) from inspiration: the more completely we can lay bare the spirit that prompted a phrase, a melody, and ungarment it of that which is to our present inquiry superfluous vesture, the more easy to read will become the riddle of that dead past some of whose intimate secrets we fain would violate.

It seems abundantly evident that for the evolution of mere music — unorchestrated and unharmonised — no super-subtle development of civilisation is necessary. Harmony has grown perfect with a certain intellectual growth of the race, and has touched an artistic culmination. Yet, in the barbaric days of merest feudalism, the impulse of an intensely-refined religious emotion gave birth to a complete body of music, unlike, it is true, in either character or form, the music of these modern centuries, but, for its superficial elements, complete and satisfying both in structure and in expression. I am entitled to assume, from the outset of inquiry, that the paramount emotion in the production of Plain Song was religion; the assumption is justified by the uses to which that

music was put. Holding this key, therefore, it becomes almost easy to divide and subdivide the characteristics of that music itself, until each particular sensitiveness from which it sprang is laid bare, and the emotions of a most remote generation are tracked through the chant that was on its lip, and that filled its ear; a chant, indeed, which, within the conventions assigned by its composers, reached an absolute of development. It is both curious and engrossing to mark this circumstance, since at a period subsequent to that culmination, the secular music of this country was still uneasy in swaddling-clothes. One instance from each is at hand; two battle-songs — *Our King went forth to Normandie* and *Deus tuorum militum*. The first is the perfect contradiction of exultation; it is saturnine, gloomy, crude—save for an occasional fine phrase — and misshapen. You would have said of the men who accepted it for a typical war-song one of two things: either they had tasted nothing of the lust of war—in this case a manifest falsity—or they had experienced the warlike passion so barbarously and so primitively that the translation of their emotion afterwards into song, could not, through lack of a sensitive memory, be other than inadequate. The hymn

Deus tuorum militum is, on the other hand, an ideal song of war: opening with a splendid phrase of triumph, ascending higher and higher, and subsiding on the closing syllable of "*militum*." It is fierce with a quick aggressiveness, and it pulses with the clamour and change of battle. The difference of result between the two songs is explained by this difference of emotional refinement; forgetfulness touches the one with barbarity, fervour vitalises the other with a sentiment that is abiding, and therefore always alert.

The prominent character of Plain Song is one of uncompromising simplicity. The creators of it were satisfied with single emotions. A modern musician would seek to tinge his love-songs with a multitude of differences; he would consider such words as climax, beseeching, despair, fervour, and the rest. The writers of Plain Song, in such an enterprise, had no thought but the expression of a mere desire. "*Fulcite me floribus*," runs one of the Antiphons, "*stipate me malis quia amore langueo*"; and the music of its setting is the simplest reflex of the words; the notes linger somewhat on "*floribus*" and "*malis*"—on the first in a slowly ascending and descending phrase, on the second in a mere phrase of descent, as it were pausing momently before the

confession "*quia amore langueo.*" By the absurdly simple change to the key of the dominant, the word "*amore*" is gently emphasised, and quietly insisted upon: an artifice which conveys the sentiment of the word, its importance and its prominence, in a manner altogether musicianly; while to the word "*langueo*" a long, undulating phrase—returning to the original key—is assigned, the last note closing a recitative perfectly expressive and perfectly musical.

Of the best work of these writers—we know not who they were, their names have passed—the same is always to be said. When they considered the possibility of a Judgment Day, they gave a simple expression to their terrified emotion. "*Lacrymosa dies illa*"—runs a line of the *Dies Iræ*—and by pitching the tone high, and devoting the first two notes of a triplet, with the interval of a semitone, to the third syllable of "*lacrymosa*," and the last note to the ultimate syllable, a very tearful and apprehensive result is effected, and by the very simplest means. To pass from the Antiphon and the common Mass music to the music of the hymns, is to pass from recitative to melody. And here again the extreme development of musical form is to be noted and admired. Perhaps the highest example

is one—*Jesu Corona Virginum*—which more easily sustains a comparison to modern music, since the ending of the Mode in which it is composed is that of the diatonic scale. It runs in four phrases, the first and fourth being identical, the third growing out of the second, and the whole completing a natural organism. To describe its character as virginal were perhaps to approach sentimentality; yet it has a curiously innocent, simple, and unsophisticated beauty of which this word alone seems descriptive.

It was chiefly humour which these composers lacked. Religion supplies only one word which is associated with humour—Hallelujah; and this is the one word upon which such humour as Plain Song knows is expended. It is an awkward humour. The musical phrases to which the word is fitted are often of terrifying length, and are usually heavy and unsympathetic. They wriggle, they grimace, they walk askew, they have no delicacy, no musical refinement. The divine gift is not fostered by a habit of gravity; and since it is to such a habit of religious gravity that we owe the high qualities of Plain Song, we must be content to live without its humour. But the fact is singular testimony to the theories here propounded.

PLAIN SONG

Where an emotional civilisation had, by a certain external influence, reached a high development, therewith arose a body of highly-developed music ; yet, in the single matter of an emotion barely affected by that external influence, the music remains barbarous and crude. There is more humour apparent—it is true—in Plain Song than in the ballads of the fifteenth century, but in such a reflection the blessed word Hallelujah must not be forgotten.

What, then, shall be concluded? What character has been tracked down across these centuries of insubstantial sound? Through the music of that time I have glimpses of a generation of men, simple in mind and in intellect—for they lacked harmony, as they lacked perspective. They had, too, the common characteristics of their development; fervent aspirations after war, terror of the unseen, a generous devotion to sacrifice, a frankly-expressed sexual instinct. Of these truths the four typical musical instances cited above are demonstration. And those simple and separate passions were intensified and memorialised to them by an overwhelming religious sense. In the long cloisters, in the abbey piles with their towers and garths, in the dark-lit cathedrals,

stately and enchanted by solemnity, the same facts are revealed by the voice of another art, the art of architecture. But the Music, which witnesses likewise, has left the monasteries in their desolate ruin, and wanders houseless through the world, singing the old history of its birth to profane and secular ears.

"OTELLO"

THE step from *Il Trovatore* to *Otello* has no parallel in the history of music. It is a development outside all law, all anticipation, all likelihood. The reasonableness for the composition of the first were proof-charge, it might be said in exaggeration, against the reasonableness for the composition of the second, and the history of the human mind bears everywhere a contrary witness to this solitary achievement. For not as he sowed did Verdi reap; rather some of the fruit of the seed that Wagner scattered Verdi harvested and gathered into beautiful garners. His star rose when the ancient forms of symmetrical music were, for purposes of a living art, preparing for dissolution. The fashion of that perfect garment wherein Gluck and Corelli and (in the culmination) Mozart had clothed their Muse was falling to the lot of yester-year. Like the Greek drama, or the whole art of any period, the tale of beauty had in itself been completed, and men were seeking expression in new forms. Then came a prelude of decadence, and the small men of the time scrambled for the crumbs that fell from the table of the Old Masters. Here and there a lonely genius came to fulness; Beethoven lived and died. But the music of the *Kapellmeister*

"OTELLO" —that faithful reflection in commonplace of the musical fashions of the past two centuries—was concerned with aimless little tunes arranged in perfect symmetry, balanced and devoid of any inspiration. It was among this wreck that Verdi's earliest musical years were spent, with results that we know. Never were airs so popular put to the uses of the world; and for fifty years *Ai nostri monti* has jingled uninterruptedly in the brains of the generations. It was the most that could be done with the spent methods of the past, but it was nevertheless so much, its success was so immediate and overwhelming, that none could have dreamed that its creator would do other than live out his musical life in the manner of its beginning. But with the change of musical fashions Verdi's genius seemed also to change; and his career will be found to parallel, though on a plane exceedingly remote, the whole development of the commonplace music of the last sixty years. And then he produced *Otello*, one of the most potent examples in music of an art organic and living that the world has yet seen. Discarding the false and the inartistic as he might some husk, Verdi, who half a century ago popularised a decadence, has here stepped into the light of a golden age.

The primary principle of *Otello*, of which to his high honour Verdi has never lost sight, is its austere limitation to the genuine vocation of music. Emotion, incident, that which life exhibits or passion specialises, are subordinate to the first demands of his art. A thunderstorm is well, and theism is well, but translated into music they are both secondary considerations. Therefore you will find that the thunderstorm wherewith the first act opens, and Iago's profession of faith in the evil gods of the second act, are not a mass of commonplace by which the composer strives first to be thunderous or blasphemous, and secondly to emit noise; there is, on the contrary, not a bar of the opening chorus, or a passage of the *Credo*, but is describable by musical terms of the simplest and most intelligible kind. Therefore are the emotions that underlie the more effectively expressed. Thus, in one of the noblest passages of the second act, when Iago questions Otello if ever he had seen in Desdemona's hands a handkerchief spotted with strawberries, the answer "*È il fazzoletto ch'io le diedi, pegno primo d'amor*" is an inspiration of pure melody; yet the childish helplessness of it, the misery of it, is developed with a most pathetic completeness. So, in the

tremendous duet that follows—perhaps the highest musical flight of the whole opera—*Si, pel ciel marmoreo giuro*, it is abundantly clear that the composer's first thought is the dignity of the music of which he is the guardian; the repetitions, the occasional symmetries, the orchestral restraint and power, the equipoise of the parts, together with the principal phrase—all these things, being musical occasions, precede the expression of the emotion which they alone do in fact essentially express. To follow the point to the end would involve a current appreciation of the whole opera, which I by no means propose to myself to accomplish. There is lovers' music where-through sex seems laid bare in sound, and the music descriptive of Cassio's sleep is as if thieved from the world that lies on the farther side of dreams. It is possible to use such words in the present condition of indifference without idly repeating language of a general experience. The sole note of adverse criticism is to complain of Verdi's too frequent use of the chromatic scale in his orchestration; there is a touch of trick-work in it. Moreover, the world will not now be long in growing out of an open-mouthed admiration for it, since the *Kapellmeister* has already sniffed its decay.

The present popularity of Verdi, if you come to consider it, is not a little strange; and, with some, it is based rather upon an easily intelligible past than upon an understood present. I have called this popularity strange, and for this reason: that had *Otello* and *Falstaff* come — an impossible supposition, but profitable to the argument—as the first of the great series of Verdi's operas, it is indubitable that the composer could not have expected from either work the general enthusiasm with which they have been accepted; but, coming as they do at the end of that singular productiveness which in its earlier efforts contained far more of the elements of popularity, the populace rejoices in the continuance of the effort, without perhaps appreciating its subsequent increase of value, while the artistic world rejoices in the precious increase of refinement, of musical quality, and of harmonic power; so that this musician, by reason of a kind of double career, has been enabled to secure the suffrages of every condition of intelligent men, be it the intelligence of common instinct—which *may*, indeed, in its uneducated state, lavish its love upon a Martin Tupper—or the intelligence of educated art. This last victory has, however, been the triumph of later years. Time was, and

that not so very long ago, when the self-conscious musician, and I use the word self-conscious in no necessarily disparaging sense, was at pains to show his depreciation for the artist of the *Trovatore*. The taste for mere melody was gone to the four winds of heaven. Tune was at a discount. We were all for the lowering, so to speak, of the musical plummet to the farthest fathoms we could discover. We were tired of the surface-colour of our musical sea. Those "sea-seasons" of melody which to our irresponsible grandfathers, who loved superficial sport, had appeared so splendid through the transformations into which the sun of a Mozart or a Gluck could persuade them, had grown stale and monotonous. We were all for the building of some musical nautilus wherewith to plunge beneath; mere melody should henceforth count for nothing; anything for a surface, everything for those dark undercurrents, those obscure and hidden revelations of mysterious places in harmony that had hitherto gone undiscovered. In some respects it was a natural reaction. Its chief ills were the prompt efforts after unintelligibility on the part of hitherto promising musicians, and the contempt into which Verdi, the last

master of the old schools of melody, presently fell.

But these contemptuous ones had not gauged the genius of this true master of the old schools of melody. He was quick to perceive the value of the proper Wagnerian reaction which had come: quick to perceive it, quick to utilise it. I have used the comparison of the sea-surfaces and the sea-depths, as between the old and new school of music. It is a superficial comparison, of course, and only applicable in its general terms; but it will serve in expounding the astonishing development of Verdi after his quick apprehension of the modern school. We may suppose Verdi to have been the composer of absolutely superficial — and very taking — music, before the advent of that school. He had, in exact terms, been careful of the popular line of his melody, and careless of those distant effects which do at all times make far more beautiful an originally beautiful melody. But the fact is—he that hath ears to hear let him hear—that the *kind* of melody which Verdi of old time composed did not easily lend itself to that enhancing effect. If he should desire thus to deepen his effects it would be necessary (he saw) to deepen the character of his former

"OTELLO" gaiety into something more gravely gay, more slowly, yet not less surely responsive . . . in other words (to turn to that most useful metaphor), to sink a little below that surface where the sunlight still shall be, but where the light shall be subdued into a more softened beauty.

. . . THE
. MANNERS
OF MUSIC

THE history of musical commonplace during the past two centuries runs perfectly parallel with the history of the greater music. Among the windings of that singular development the trail of the second-rate has twisted: balanced and equipoised with Gluck, fluently tuneful with Rossini, self-consciously pessimist with Beethoven, neat and respectable with Mendelssohn, shockingly irregular with Wagner and the later Verdi. Now the inept or the uninspired in music is not of necessity the commonplace; these may be merely dull, whereas the commonplace is to be defined as the fulness of form joined to the minimum of music. It has the same kind of vegetable vitality as that which continues the growth of a curl of hair round the ears of the dead. It is an unvirgined art; it gives place to nothing young, to nothing spontaneous, to nothing free; yet it is typical and distinctive, even as the physical type in the bodies that lie scattered over the spaces of the world is for each generation separate, various. Thus, as has been said, it accords with all the modes of contemporary art; and when those modes change, when the interpreters of things go a-questing for fresh forms, the makers of commonplace also go forth, like the camp-followers of an army, to pick

up the remainder of the spoil: not the gold and silver that Achilles carried to his tent, but a waste of battered metal, the ignoble armour of their kind. This of all commonplace—of letters, of war, of conversation, of polar expeditions; but of music particularly and prominently. For of music we have more careful and more complete records, both in its greatness and in its poverty, not only in the old folios, dim with time, yellow and dusty, which everywhere survive, but also in the ears of the people, since the lilt and facility of an old air have a more persistent endurance than the memories of any other type of human productiveness. We are quit, and thankfully quit, of the literary commonplace a half-century old; but there is music older than a century, commonplace in production and in continuance, which still jingles above the tired brains of this over-stocked generation.

The present facts of musical commonplace are matters of life to reckon with, and chiefly to avoid as experiences; the past facts of musical commonplace are rather matters of science for classification; and the changes are marked by much subtlety—the same subtlety as distinguishes the human type in its perpetual and most gradual change. It would be easy to discover the essential difference

between the manner and costume of Sir Richard Steele and those of Beau Nash, between Beau Nash and young Mr. D'Israeli; not so facile as between Sir Richard Steele and the slightly younger Mr. Budgell. But as one may generally separate the eighteenth century and the nineteenth (from the standpoint of the commonplace dude) by such titles as the century of the skirt and the century of the frock-coat, so one may separate the present and the past (from the standpoint of the commonplace musician) by such titles as the age of symmetrical and the age of unsymmetrical music. Of the two one knows not which is worse in commonplace. Symmetrical music in commonplace is cheaper, unsymmetrical music more self-conscious. The first was quicker in propagation, had a terrible gift of tenacity, spread to the vulgar lungs with the ample sweep of a plague; and the life of this music, appreciated for the simple sake of symmetry, is still conserved among that passive and uninfluential public down which the tastes of a class something more aristocratic take so long a time to filter. But, on the other hand, the newer commonplace of the unsymmetrical is rapidly conquering its ancient rival. In the cultured suburbs, in the progressive press, all that is uncouth

and unhinged in music is, on account of this very irregularity, rapidly securing a kind of religious worship. Among these Mozart is described as a little *passé*. The numerous herd that pretended to understand the great musical movements of recent times, that in fact did not understand the least of those tendencies, that tossed its cap to the horns of the moon in its applause of Wagner, because it held that his mission was prophetical first and musical afterwards — this congregation of wild asses is now harmlessly engaged in braying abroad the new creed, that music should be permitted to wander unrestrained ; never dreaming that here is only a newborn commonplace, of which Wagner is no less the father than were Mozart and his fellow-princes the All-Parents of the other and older commonplace.

The elder commonplace of symmetry was, with all its vapidity, bound by severest rule. Law was its life. In law it began, in law it ended, and music scarcely approached it at all. A repertory of regulations and a perfect sense of balance: these were the whole kit of a *Kapellmeister*. He worked a little after this sort. He chose any phrase—inspiration mattered not here—and he laboured it into a complete movement. By

common tricks of harmony he threw his phrase into the dominant, and joined the parts by approved musical junctions. Then he walked round it; he transposed the whole into a minor, and changed the order of balance after a return to the major. Then the primal phrase was suddenly dropped. After an acrobatic change of key, he ran innocently through a secondary idea, modulating at will, and as innocently ran back again; then he would begin a little higher, and run a little beyond, and higher and higher, and beyond and beyond, until the right hand was heaven high, the bass following in a leisurely *staccato*. After a trill upon the topmost note of his ambition, he would descend *fortissimo*—treble and bass in counterpoint—until the dominant was reached; then, sequent upon a crash, he would travel quietly and slowly through such a progression as would restore the piece to its original key, and thus secure a return to the original phrase; to that phrase, surrendered for the wildness of the middle movement, he would now return, and, balancing the whole on the tip of his nose, he would arrive duly at the common chord, and conclude with a grateful sense of originality. The commonplace writers of that day, hampered by musical red-tape, had come to

care scarce anything for the music of their compositions and everything for the rules of their profession. They might admire such a musician as Corelli for his correctness, and hardly recognise the inspiration of his melody, which in all ages is potent to proclaim him great.

The newer commonplace is not so easily described, for there are no musical terms wherein to describe it. Lawlessness is its life. It indulges in fearful harmonies, in chromatic orchestration, in a finish upon unexpected notes, but above all in a horror of the old symmetry. Melody is also its aversion; and it has a peculiar trick of approaching melody and presently scampering away as if to prove its superiority. It is realistic in the most ignoble sense. Each writhing of the language to which the music is set impinges a corresponding writhing upon the music. The thought of a cuckoo is instant excuse for a barful of the well-known interval: and whistlings, scrapings, shriekings, drummings will, each in turn, express for you some essential fact of passion, description, or emotion. The fulness of irritation is reached through the deliberate consciousness of this modern composer that, whatever thing he may be, he is not commonplace. And it may happen

that here and there among the unintelligible matter of his composition will spring up a phrase reminiscent of the *Kapellmeister* of old. You recognise it, you know the artless treatment it might once have received, and you wait a little expectantly for the second limb of the phrase to which the former tradition would have offered smiling welcomes. But the modern composer, unknowing that neither in symmetry nor in unsymmetry the kernel of music lies, with horrid deliberation destroys the natural conclusion of the phrase, by way of demonstration that he is a writer of original parts. Thus is the old dulness avenged upon the new cleverness. Thus do the old laws of art work their way to their appointed issues, despite the many-faced forms of commonplace which, as they were the dead raised for an hour by a galvanic potency, gibber and squeak and ape the richness of life. But their master quickly finds them out, and fells them into silence; and their master is Death.

HUMOUR . . . IN . MUSIC

THE phrase has a progressive savour. It seems to give ominous approval to the catchwords of the most moonstruck band of practitioners that ever confused the intentions of an art. Let it then be asserted at the outset that music is absolutely speechless. It commerces with the language not of words but of emotions. In this lies the compulsion of its most stringent rule. Because the language of emotion is inarticulate, because the beauty of music is a vague beauty, as of a dream, there is the stronger need for binding shackles. The government of music, its form, its method, its scholastic needs, are as it were a modern interpretation of ancient witchcraft. Of eld they fashioned their willow wands, they drew their charmed circles, uttered their secret incantations, mingled their caldrons: and the spirit arose. The mistake of a sign, the false move of a hand, brought confusion to the worker and to those for whom he worked:

> "O ye mistook! Ye should have snatched his wand
> And bound him fast. Without the rod reversed.
> And backward mutters of disserving power,
> We cannot free the lady that sits here
> Bound in strong fetters fixed and motionless."

No less imperative, no less particular, are the laws that govern the right reason of music. That Muse

will be wooed and won ever by the same arts ; and if a man should strive to replace the melodious rhythms of her true utterance by the alien sounds of an everyday speech, she will unloose her hands and depart. Her influences are subtle; and he that would win her must learn her.

This—the purely emotional character of music—being accepted for an axiom, it seems legitimate to inquire into the humorous possibilities of an art which, in its own lawful kingdom, has a limitless world for work. In the beginning of things, when music was in the cradle—for though an indefinite progress is a theory to scout, a growth into full being is a clearly observable experience—there was in its composition no hint of humour. The ballads of the fifteenth century are uniformly dreary, and, though not uninspired, are informed by not the shadow of a smile. When, after the battle of Agincourt, England burst into the song, *Our King went forth to Normandie*, the popular air, couched in minor, solemn and slow, with one phrase curiously prophetic of Handel, seems to this generation more fitted by its emotion for a *Lacrymosa* than for the war-chant of a triumphant nation. In plain song, indeed, which had reached a full development when the ballad music was yet

in infancy, it is easy to detect, especially in the long Hallelujah of the *Graduale*, a feeling of gaiety, perfectly out of date and a little askew, but unmistakably the product of a contemporary sense of humour. With the growth of music, as with the growth of every art, the visitations of humour became more persistent and more abiding. Just as, one may suppose, the laws of perspective clamoured for discovery when a sense of humour prompted laughter against the contorted and impossible figures of early pictorial art, so the same sense touched the wry melancholy of youthful music with the emotions that are born of laughter. How, then, define the humour of music, and how persuade the world that humour is here or there? That it has dwellings in music who can doubt that compares Leporello's opening solo in *Don Giovanni* to *Our King went forth to Normandie*? It is not that there is a mere superfluity of art in the one, a falling short in the other. The one has bubbled out of a well of laughter; the other has oozed from a rock—not only where no laughter is, but—where no laughter can be.

There is no subtle sense requisite for the detection of humour in music, and it should not be a difficult matter to select the great humourists of

music. Again the words have an ominous sound; but if it be carefully noted that, though Music is served by humourists, she has no commerce with wits, the scholastic theory still remains triumphant. To be witty in music is to adopt a frankly undress manner. Moreover, musical wit (so-called) is chiefly a matter of puns, effected for the most part by the trombone, the bassoon, and the kettle-drum; and when it is possible to write of a musical pun on the trombone, you at once begin to perceive that you are not dealing seriously with musical art. But the quality of humour in music is no more than the dictating power, the paramount sensitiveness, from which humorous music, governed and orderly, is derived. It is also to be noted that the effect of genuinely humorous music is not to draw laughter, or even smiles, from the intelligent listener, but to arouse in one proportion or another the same exhilaration, the same gay exuberance, or more restrained buoyancy of spirit, which in the musician prompted his composition. It is true that there are certain passages of Mozart over which it is impossible not to expend a smile; but it will be found that these are invariably passages of silence, of pause, when the music momently ceases, hangs as it were on the wing before tumbling through the air in a

renewed flight; thus you smile in expectation and in its fulfilment, tickled by a conscious egotism, and by a complacent sense of superiority.

To name the humourists of music were to make an arbitrary and personal selection; but the slenderest meditation will determine Mozart and Wagner—the one in his *Nozze* and the other in his *Meistersinger* — as, with Beethoven, the greatest among them. Since it is impossible to write a verbal definition of the thing which is the fount of humorous music, we are compelled to resort to some absolute standard from which measurement and analogy may be derived. One such passage, which must appeal to the dullest intelligence as evolved from a fit of perfect humour, may be found as the *allegretto* movement of Mozart's fourth pianoforte sonata. The thing is a chrysolite, so untouched is it by every human emotion save this one of humorousness; and it is in this movement that the silences, fuller of daily speech than the music, do actually win the listener to smiles. To name musicians turn by turn would be the excuse for little more than mere epithet; but it is curious to note how slight a vein of humour is apparent in the whole work of Gluck—lovely, magnificent, though it be in other qualities;

and that the humour of Beethoven—grim, saturnine, satirical, grotesque—has a curious modern counterpart in the humour of the author of *Life's Handicap*. It would seem that a certain irresponsible following in music, complacently convicting humour of vulgarity, are resolved to pursue as a serious matter, musical wit; whereby they for the most part are working their way to appointed issues, of which they know nothing now, but which oblivion is destined to reveal to their posterity.

TSCHAIKOWSKY


W.L. BRUCKMAN.

By the death of Tschaikowsky, Europe was unhappily deprived, within a very brief period succeeding the death of Gounod, of a musician of promise and of great performance. In truth, I regret the promise as much as the performance. For the man had, without any question, a growing vitality, and, moreover, a vitality that grew slowly. He seemed to build himself up, in some sort, as the years drew gradually forward. Beginning as a student at the Conservatoire but newly founded in St. Petersburg not forty years ago, and that, too, at an age when most young men are far past the time when they choose to subject themselves to the humiliations of a pupil, he gradually developed into a teacher of music, taking for a time more or less responsible positions until, but twenty years since, he settled down to his sole vocation of musical composition. Many works, both before and since that period, proceeded from his pen, and his reputation steadily grew in the West of Europe, by that curious process through which a man's name is passed from mouth to mouth as, haply, an accomplished artist, or a meritorious orator, or a resourceful writer, whose work is barely known by the men who sing his praise at

second or third hand. For it must be confessed that it is only in very recent days that Tschaikowsky's music has been a power for enthusiasm in England. It is true that he from rare occasion to rare occasion conducted in concert-rooms, where his work has undergone interpretation; and a few summers ago Cambridge thought fit to honour him by conferring upon him her Musical Doctorate —an occasion which, according to custom, was solemnised by a performance of copious extracts from his works. Nevertheless, it may generally be said that his music had not, till a brief while ago, entered the ears of the people of this country, and that it was barely familiar even to those who love to stand separate from the people in superior knowledge and artistic enlightenment.

If it were required of me to describe the musician Tschaikowsky by sudden epigram, I would fain call him a barbarian smitten by the musical *Zeit-geist.* And thereby hangs a tale. The barbarian loves, above all things in sound, a decisive and marked rhythm. Delicate and fluent melody, the melody, let us say, of Beethoven's "grande, sublime, entraînante ouverture d'Eléonore"—in Berlioz' phrase—is, of course, a matter of perfect indifference to the savage ear; for him the emphatic

clang of the cymbals arranged in perfect intervals of time; for him the tramp, the set march of feet dumping the ground in flawless rhythm; the virtue of sound as sound is to him as engrossing as the virtue of self-sacrifice to an infant. He is without perception of its quality. On the other hand, the musical *Zeit-geist*, in its most abandoned form, declares that lawlessness is the only law of music, that "il ne faut tenir compte que l'idée, ne pas faire le moindre cas de sensation," that, in a word "le beau est horrible, l'horrible est beau." Now if we can conceive this lawlessness, this sole attention to single ideas rather than to the full sensation, this passion for the all that is realistic, attached to a vehement and uncontrollable passion for rhythm; if, in a word, all these strange excesses are resolutely confined to the strictest laws of time, and immitigable emphasis, so that the result can be described fairly and legitimately, as melody, then we have a conception of this musician of modern Russia—as it were, reduced to essentials. Add to this a large accomplishment, a luxurious grasp of detail, and an ample command of the extraordinary resources of modern orchestration, and we have a conception of this musician of modern Russia more or less in detail.

TSCHAIKOWSKY

A strange mingling surely! And such a mingling as only modern Russia could provide for us. The man in what appears to us as the ultimate condition of culture indissolubly united by the cohesion of a single brain to the man of primitive musical passion and savage musical desires. And what of the result? Tschaikowsky's music is found to be emphatic, terrible, penetrating at times, at times heartlessly merry, and keenly vital, seldom persuasive, or tender, or kind. Somewhere at the junction of the very old with the very new in his composition, something that was essentially human fell away from him. He can reel off a polonaise or a mazourka, he can conceive what goes as near as thought to a musical shriek, he can wail for you most mournfully, he can laugh for you; but he cannot — speaking generally—sigh for you, or love for you. He is the most modern of all musicians.

"PARSIFAL":
. . A MERE
. . GLIMPSE

"PARSIFAL": A MERE GLIMPSE

I CAN see no human chance, at least in the near future, of anything approaching a purely sober and rational attitude on the part of the world towards the work of Wagner. What is more, after hearing *Parsifal* twice, I do not feel particularly concerned about the smallness of that chance. If we are to have a superstition, if we cannot get on without some kind of a prophet, I feel assured that the composer and writer of *Parsifal*, is just as good as any other great artist for the purpose. The poet and musician of *Parsifal*, in fact, is probably better for the purpose than any other. He is in this music-drama—at all events at Bayreuth: one dreads to think of the termination of the copyright — completely satisfactory and — orderly. After being present at a performance of *Parsifal*, one, perhaps naturally, makes some sort of an effort to compare, let me say, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* under a similar condition of performance; the one similar condition being that everybody, in preparation and in act, from the smallest to the greatest detail, shall do his best, under competent, not to say perfect, direction. Still, even under such conditions, I cannot think of *Don Giovanni*—as Wagner himself called it, the greatest *opera* (not music-drama) that ever was

"PARSIFAL": A MERE GLIMPSE

written — appearing in anything like the same coherence as *Parsifal*. Mozart and Wagner might meet outside rival theatres and shake hands; but Da Ponte and Wagner! The combination makes one blush. For the peculiar quality of *Parsifal*, the quality which is outside all religious controversy, which sets it apart from every other music-drama composed by Wagner, or opera composed by anybody else, is its perfect, its sublime, its utter dignity and completeness. It grows like a flower to the sun, and it closes like a flower to the night, and with the same organic orderliness; its motion is perfectly measured, it never gibbers, or stares, or halts, it goes "right on" with the inspired inevitableness of a planet. I am not criticising; I am explaining its place in the creation of the Wagner "superstition." If Wagner had never written *Parsifal*, Bayreuth by this time would have fallen into its place as a town where, if you will only seek it out, you can find Wagner's work interpreted, sometimes, at its best. But the composition of *Parsifal* has made that, for the present at least, impossible. Human nature being what it is, needing an idol (how dimly soever the true measure of the adorable object may be appreciated), *Parsifal*, in its present surroundings

could not fail to secure to its creator a universal and unmeasured adoration. Moreover, this is a worship which is all the more readily accorded since it is only a dark instinct of the splendid qualities of the thing, and a hidden belief that there are "other glories behind," which persuade many men and all women into that worship. The worshippers of the sun adored because they thought the beauty of the sun contained a great deal which it does not contain; now that we no longer worship the sun we, nevertheless, admire that beauty and accord to it our full tributes, knowing its measure and the glory of its continent. Therefore it is that since I do not profess to be a worshipper at the shrine of any musical superstition, I find it all the more necessary to account for the faith which is in me, and to give some reasons, however personal they may be, for my admiration of and unbounded delight in *Parsifal*, not as a sun worshipper, but, let us say, as an astronomer.

There is a book which has been eagerly bought by ardent admirers of Wagner, and which deals with *Parsifal* from a bewildering multiplicity of views. It proves, in the first place, that *Parsifal* contains the perfect theory of government, and that it shows forth a national ideal which it would

be vain for the peoples of the earth to attempt to better. Next, it demonstrates that *Parsifal* is in itself a perfect theory of religion. Furthermore, *Parsifal* is the ultimate goal and concentration into a final peace of all the war, the rapine, the lust, the sin of the world; it is a latter-day revelation of Christ; it is the perfect symbolism of all human realities; and last, but quite least, the music of *Parsifal* is very beautiful. If this is not the production of your sun-worshipper I should like to know what is. In the midst of such clamorous absurdity it becomes almost a duty to show a little reasonableness, and to explain, however inadequately, why, from the purely artistic point of view, this music-drama seems worthy of enthusiasm and admiration. I confess, to begin with, that the symbolic and allegorical point of view touches me very little. As a beautiful legend, as a gracious story, the work is both appealing and delightful, and doubtless those moments which are claimed as particularly symbolic—such as the Anointing and the Washing of the Feet—are those which appear to the common materialist as the moments which are, as a matter of fact, particularly beautiful. But the thing is, of course, to be judged not as a symbolic or as an allegorical work, but simply as a work of art. I

suppose that all men, by this time, have sufficient knowledge of the formation and structure of *Parsifal* to enable them, if they have not happened to hear it, to make some *à priori* judgment as to the likelihood of their condemning or accepting *Parsifal*. But, if they have not heard it, I beg to state that all such *à priori* judgment is of no value in the world. The Wagnerian method is well known; and it is well known that the Wagnerian method was never so pitilessly, so resolutely pursued, so unchangeably cherished and reverenced by Wagner as in the composition of *Parsifal*. Those who disliked the *leit-motif* for the principle of the thing, as if it were a kind of workhouse method of writing opera (labelling a character with a number, rather than with a subtle, meaning melody), would naturally dislike for that very reason the principle of *Parsifal*, which is of *leit-motif* all compact. These were not perhaps likely to be persuaded by all the industry, the labour, the fulness, the amazing boldness of *The Ring*, into a sense of previous enthusiasm. To all such the answer again and again is: Go to Bayreuth and hear. The extracts which are to be heard at London concerts give not only no just idea of the work, but sometimes show it in a dry and unattractive

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light. Seen and heard as a whole, *Parsifal* may be understood and appreciated at its true worth. There is not a *motif*, from the first most solemn opening, that is not in its way perfect and true melody, haunting, ineffably beautiful. Just now I compared the whole work to the opening and shutting of a flower; and I would use the same illustration to describe the separate *motifs*—and particularly the Good Friday music—of *Parsifal*. They open, as it were, like the petals of a flower, slowly expanding, to reveal the depth and beauty of the blossom, and they close rhythmically, leaving unutterable memories and dim, tearful signs of beauty within the inner circles of the heart. They are full of thoughts that lie too deep for tears. Long after the ear has listened to the actual sound, they return with a power, with an overwhelming and indefinite shadowing, that make this music a thing for ever apart and sacred.

MOZART . . . AT MUNICH

WHEN the world lost Mozart and all the probabilities of artistic production that were folded in that young brain, it is not likely that his greatness — or rather, his uniquely magnificent genius—was appraised at anything even approaching its right value. To the world he was indeed an artist; but so was Salieri, and it is probable that a majority would have voted for Salieri on any artistic hustings. Mozart could barely save himself from starvation by the product of his mind, and men, it seems, cared very little whether he died or whether he lived. His bosom friends could not face the rain on the day that he was tossed into a pauper's grave,—and, in a word, if there be no immortality of the soul, then the life of Mozart and the work of Mozart must rank among the most inimitable mockeries of our human existence. He died; and by slow degrees the significance of that life and work began to reveal itself to his own and to succeeding generations. By slow degrees indeed; for it is even possible that at this time most men do not recognise all the greatness, all the splendour, all the meaning of that which he accomplished in his few and evil days.

It seems a far cry from Mozart to Wagner; yet

it cannot be denied that if we are now more and more persuading ourselves to the right appreciation of Mozart, it is in some measure due to the teaching and accomplishment of Wagner. When, indeed, Wagner, by the insistent demands which his own artistic nature made upon him, looked abroad for some means by which he might communicate himself fittingly and fully to the world, he came to the conclusion that opera, as it is generally understood, was a vicious and corrupt form of art. He thus convicted all writers of opera, including Mozart himself, of using the formulas of art in a corrupt fashion; and he announced that although he was willing to concede that *Don Giovanni* was the greatest opera that ever was composed, he could not be blind to the regrettable truth, that even *Don Giovanni* was the offspring of an illegitimate union of the arts. What came of these theories we all know. Basing his practice upon what he conceived to be a new art-theory, he did in truth produce a magnificent body of work according to the Wagnerian gospel of music-drama,—work which by reason of its enormous power, sincerity, strength, and beauty has, as a matter of fact, eclipsed nearly all the operatic work of this century. Then it appeared to Wagner

that his theories indeed were triumphantly true. He was not inclined to modesty at any time,— and he had reason; but in this instance, at all events, he certainly attributed too little to the tremendous force of his own artistic production, and too much to the theories upon which he based that production. It has come now to be practically understood that, after all, his music-drama, although it destroyed so largely the operatic formula of Wagner's generation, was in the long-run only a repetition of opera with a rearrangement of terms. The intensely dramatic genius of the man had deluded him into the idea that he was doing something entirely new, when he was in truth ardently engaged over expressing himself with greater personal and individual rather than with theoretic originality. The fact was, therefore, that he did not really destroy and burn up all the operatic work that in his theory was vicious and corrupt, but that he did destroy so much of it as depended for its life upon mere song; what there had been of drama in it before was left, like that within the smeared doors of Israel in Egypt, untouched and still vital. In a word, Wagner did with onslaughts, with alarums and excursions, only that which, if his mother had never borne him,

the staling finger of time was quite prepared to do.

The great difficulty that now remained, after the devastation which his cyclonic career had wrought upon the fields of opera, was to discover what exactly had been left whole and untouched. That, however, was not all. Wagner, in teaching the world how his own music-dramas should be played, was really teaching how everything that is truly dramatic in opera should be played; for it was, as I suspect, far more the method of playing the old opera than anything else which led him into his fallacious generalisations upon that subject. It seems never to have occurred to him that the application of his own stage principles to the presentation of what was dramatic in that old opera might prove some of it to contain after all nearly everything, if not everything, of essential value that his own brand-new art-form of music-drama contained. To return. The discerning among musicians began to perceive in the gradual evolution of these truths that to the bulk of Mozart's work belonged all the truest qualities of that drama for which Wagner had battled so loudly and so long,—although even now, and in the very latest "Life" of Wagner that has been published,

it is asserted that Mozart accomplished the feat by a kind of divine accident, presumably because he never wrote about himself or his ideas in the journals of his time,—and it began to be apparent that if Wagner's admirably just and sound views and theories upon the actual staging of his own music-drama were applied to Mozart's work, something not unlike a new revelation of that musician's genius would be unrolled before the living receptive world of art of to-day.

Among those who have been led to carry out these excellently reasonable ideas in practice, the foremost is undoubtedly Herr von Possart, the very accomplished Intendant of the Residenz Theater, and Hof-Theater of Munich. The able and even magnificent work he had achieved at the Hof-Theater in connection with Wagner's music-dramas no doubt led him to conclusions such as are indicated by the line of argument I have already sketched out; and a very few years ago he began, with the customary thoroughness that distinguishes everything he touches, to reduce those theoretic conclusions to practice. His first really grand success was achieved in the production of *Figaro's Hochzeit*, and he has since built upon this success until this year he has been able to

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present at the Residenz Theater what is practically a cyclus of Mozart's work. I propose, therefore, as briefly as possible, and as exactly as may be, to examine the nature of the artistic work which Herr von Possart has accomplished at Munich, in justifying to the extremest limit of fact the dramatic achievement of Mozart.

The extraordinary growth of absurd conventions which had been superimposed upon all operatic work previous to Wagner's own time, had also worked its evil best upon the operas of Mozart. What we know as the Italian school of operatic singing had indeed covered those operas with absurd details which, so far as such a thing was possible, went to destroy the dramatic sentiment that their creator had breathed into them. Herr von Possart's first task, therefore, and no mean one either, was to remove the perilously weighty incubus of convention that was burdening these works. This he first of all to a large extent accomplished by a strict revision of the text-books, not in any sense of the word destroying or even tarnishing the source of Mozart's inspiration, but by a brisk and pointed German translation, and in some cases by a slight revision of the *scenario*, brightening, cleaning as it were, the stories which Mozart

had found worthy of his musical genius. The next step was to "go back upon" the orchestra for which (and precisely for which) Mozart had written. The size of the Residenz Theater was a material advantage for his purpose, and the Mozart orchestra, as I can testify, is exactly large enough for it, even justifying, odd as at this day it may sound, those curious little words which the master once wrote to his mother—"You cannot imagine what a noise we made." I say the words sound oddly, for Mozart, it may be observed casually, had naturally never dreamed of a Wagner night at the theatre next door. Having secured his theatre, his book, his orchestra, and his theory, Herr von Possart's next step was to catch his players, and to show them how Mozart should be played according to the convention of Wagnerian music-drama, and not according to that of Italian opera. In every point he has been wonderfully successful, and the result has been to remove an opaque covering, as it were, from this greatly dramatic work, and to bring it forward to the light of our day, by which we may discover in a thousand unsuspected places, beauties of appropriate musical situation and of illuminating passages of humour, and, above all, by which it is shown

that, no less than in the case of Wagner, Mozart wrote his dramas with a full knowledge and appreciation of them as coherent and consistent wholes, with a continuous appreciation of character, and with an unfailing sense of separate dramatic individualities in music. It appears to be the fashion, as I have said, to attribute this achievement to unconscious genius; but the achievement is there, and, after all, the theory should by this time have grown cheap which denies to genius so transcendent a self-knowledge so pitiably small.

Of the four operas which have now been given at the Munich Residenz Theater under these brilliant circumstances, I know not which to select as an example of the most successful demonstration that Herr von Possart's methods are true in fact and in art. Perhaps *Cosi fan Tutte* stands out in my memory with shining persistence. This is a work which has been reckoned even by the learned as something less than a masterpiece. "The book is utterly and irredeemably absurd," says one; "Mozart was tired when he wrote," says another; "his head was full of *Zauberflöte*, and he let the minor details of the opera go where they pleased." I can quite imagine that such criticism

is justified in the face of anything like a third or fourth-rate interpretation of the work, for the details are so subtly interwoven with the essence of the drama that, given an unintelligible presentation of the book, or given anything but the finest appreciation of the delicacy and appropriateness of those details, and it will be most likely that they will appear flat, meaningless, and unprofitable. Of the Munich performance I have in my mind a series of lovely stage pictures, rarely beautiful and well-ordered, yet perfectly plain to the understanding, and with the transaction of those scenes a music of the most poignant and masterly serenity. In this opera, where there is humour everywhere, and tenderness and compassion everywhere,—the three qualities that fill all Mozart's best music,—there is also a sense of the most curious and touching peacefulness, that reaches its ultimate possible limit, as it seems, in that enchanting choral serenade which the despised lovers cause to be sung to their mistresses outside the long lovely Italian garden of their palace. *Figaro* has more lovely songs—*Cosi fan Tutte* can boast neither a "Voi che sapete" nor a "Dove sono"; *Don Giovanni* perhaps touches in the music a point of supernatural terror and of loveliness reached

nowhere else in the range of all opera, but neither *Figaro* nor the *Don* can steal away from *Cosi fan Tutte* its own serene atmosphere, or its title to be considered in the whole operatic work of Mozart as his "place of peace." And that is a revelation which in these times Munich alone has made.

Of the Munich *Seraglio*, the Munich *Figaro*, the Munich *Don Giovanni*, precisely the same praise is to be spoken. In all these instances the same lesson is taught, the same curtain is withdrawn, the same revelation is made. The stories, as a preliminary, are made absolutely intelligible, and *then* it is shown with what a fulness of dramatic significance Mozart transformed those stories, taking them from the workaday world of the common librettist, and translating them by his supreme art into the glorious heaven of beauty which they now occupy as by divine right. Wagner once deplored that the popularity of his *Tannhäuser* was due less to the drama that he had written than to certain lyric beauties that it contained; and "I doubt," said he, "if my *Tannhäuser* has ever been really put upon the stage." For too many years, also, Mozart has retained his hold on the world merely by his lyric beauties; now, at all

events, thanks to Munich, his masterpieces are "really" being "put upon the stage." One can but hope that Munich will be a pillar of fire by night, and will lead others into that promised land which indeed overflows with milk and honey.

. . EPILOGUE: . .
. ."VANITAS
VANITATUM"

"My son," said the Sage, as the young man contemplated his manuscript with a complacent smile, and folded it anticipating destruction, "when you have lived, as I have lived, beyond my three-hundredth year, you will perceive that your argument is very futile and very vain. When I was a young man, I too knew this delight of a judgment by conventions. The great Albert we counted as a dreamer; Erasmus we wrote down a fop; Thomas of Aquin we held for a demigod, though he plucked his philosophy from Aristotle (*his* reign went out, and now is in again); Dante we drove from his native town; Macchiavel died in one of our prisons; Bocace, indeed, we loved, for who could but love, without or with conventional judgments, so gay and boon a companion? Petrarca, following the manners of our time with perfection and delighted obedience, we crowned with laurels; we hanged Savonarola in a Florentine market-place, because he would not approve his preaching to our true-born conventions—we could do nothing less with him; Pico della Mirandola died in a convent, unfollowed and unhonoured; Bernard of Cîteaux, who jumped high to the whip and the spur of our day, shook the pillars of the world, and drove the great

"VANITAS VANITATUM"

Abelard from the schools; you know—to make my tale brief—the fate of your Milton. And if I pass from literature to other arts: what but an accident—the accident of courtly favour, not the essential right of assured approval—rescued Gluck in his struggle with contemporary criticism? Cherubini, Meyerbeer, Rossini,—as the first said, 'cette disposition harmonique me paraît préférable à l'autre, mais les anciens maîtres ayant été de l'avis contraire, il faut s'y soumettre,'—because they never wandered away from the possibilities of general and conventional approval, lived and died happy, rich and envied. While Mozart dies a pauper, and is carried to a pauper's grave. And consider the persecutions endured by Hector Berlioz, the persecutions of such criticism as you are this moment folding! It is the same with every art, which I will not be so otiose as to particularise.

"You follow my point? The world is ever under the dominion of many Schools, by all of which save your own, if you ever wander away from them, you are damned beyond redemption—until your own School shall triumph. A generation ago we taught that Lord Byron was the greatest poet of his age; to-day there are men so

scornful of him that they call him a 'Cockney Odysseus,' and glory in the fact. Untie that manuscript of yours. It is an essay, I see, upon a book of verse. You do not like this poet whose voice you say is new and strange and cacophonous withal. You would have written the same upon the appearance of *Paradise Lost*, sitting in judgment on that book which in this same paper of yours you declare to be incomparable. You grant that this new singer has originality, has strength, scholarship and the rest. But he breaks—is it not so?—through all the conventions that poetry enjoins; he is too ambitious, he is difficult, he is pretentious; and it may be that when this generation has lapsed, your children will arise and call him blessed, the sole inspired singer of his period! Look about you at the literary cliques of the time, banded together by their little shibboleths and common prejudices. In this quarter literary reputations are fixed by standard, and all thought alien to its emotions is cast naked upon dung-heaps of disgrace; in that quarter the little great men of the time proclaim adhesion to reform and revolution. No two minds coincide upon any particular dramatic problem. This cultured person holds the Renaissance to be the world's salvation

"VANITAS VANITATUM"

that one dreams art, and loves life among rood-screens and Gothic shrines. Mysticism and religion are professed by those humbly proud ones who claim that they alone have seen the Revelation, and that you and the world cannot attain to their snowy heights; and you and the world despise them most ardently for this partly inspired madness of assumption. The bones of verse-makers are the contention of rival critics; that which is good music and that which is bad are points upon which few pairs of ears are agreed; there is no law to one that is not the privilege of another. All criticism, in fine, is vanity. Each living man is his own critical school. Believe the words of the wise, my son; cease from practising this method of personal and relative persuasion; adopt, for a profession, gardening, or brick-laying, or acting, and cast your manuscript among the flames."

And the youth went forth to post it.

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